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LETTERS

Edward To His GRACE The *Fisher*

Lord PRIMATE

OF ALL

IR E L A N D.

CONTAINING A

VINDICATION

O F

The DOCTRINE and CHARACTER of Saint
PAUL, in Answer to the Objections of
the late Lord *BOLINBROKE*.

By *JOHN BRETT*, D. D. Rector of
Moynalty in the Diocese of *Meath*, and of *Fer-*
cullen in the Diocese of *Kildare*.

*For we are not as many who corrupt the Word of God
but as of Sincerity, but as of God, in the Sight o
God, speak we in Christ. 2 Cor. ii. 17.*

D U B L I N :

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LETTERS



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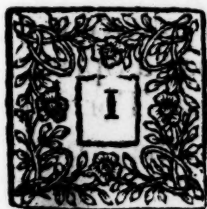
TO HIS GRACE The

Lord PRIMATE

OF ALL

IRELAND.

May it please your GRACE,



IN the Conversation I have lately had with you upon Subjects of Literature, I have been exceedingly pleased, and you will excuse me if I say exceedingly surpris'd : Pleas'd, that in most Things, our Sentiments have so exactly agreed ; surpris'd, that in that excessive Crowd and Hurry of Men and Business, in which you are so constantly employed, you had found Leisure and Time to read, and not only to read but to consider and di-

gest, what has been brought into the World under the Title of Lord *Bolinbroke's* Works.

They who, with no friendly View, have so industriously cut you out Employment of another Kind ; judging of you, by the Interruption and Disturbance their Labours have brought upon themselves, will not readily imagine, or being told will possibly not believe, that your Grace had either Time or Attention for such Exercises ; for Exercises that require sedate, and undisturbed Thought, and which yield little Entertainment and less Profit, where the Mind is distracted with the Cares of Ambition, of Avarice, or of Pleasure.

In the Situation you have been in for some time past (a Situation that Necessity had forced you into, a Necessity too that you had no way to shift off) even Friends the best disposed, would hardly expect it : In Circumstances so apt to perplex, and where they do, that render Perplexity so excusable, such Evenness and Composure, is very uncommon : In such Cases it is never looked for ; it is a Disappointment to find it. The Man who enjoys it, however deeply immersed in the World, certainly lives above it ; the Cares of the World, whatever ill Nature may suggest to the contrary, and however strongly they may press or solicit, are in his Account but secondary Cares, he has a Spring of Joy and Satisfaction within, that no Torrent from without, however impetuously it may bear against him, can ever vitiate or foul.

In writing to your Grace, I should decline saying any thing, that has the Air or Appearance of Compliment, did I not consider myself as writing at the same time to the World : You know my

Design,



Design, and therefore must excuse what you may not like ; I have your Permission to make you the Medium for conveying my Sentiments upon this Occasion to the Publick : You did not impose, but you gave the Hint, you pointed out the Task I have here assigned to myself, and you know the Track in which I am to go.

Common Reputation at the first Appearance of this Author's Works, had represented them as very formidable : Upon nearer Acquaintance in your Grace's Judgment, as well as mine, the Terror abates, by Familiarity, we both think it wears off. A Writer who advances so many wild Paradoxes ; who maintains so many and so palpable Absurdities ; who so often, frequently in the Compass of a few Pages, contradicts himself ; who varies, and who changes his Character so often, and makes Concessions in one, which he is forced to retract in the next ; who charges Authors with what they never said, and quotes others upon Trust, at best upon Memory, without consulting, or looking into them ; who sets himself against Religion in general, and is for tearing up, and pulling down without planting, or building any thing in the room of what he would destroy ; can never, I apprehend, be much followed, or long admired : Religion I compute cannot suffer much by his Means, Revelation, I have no Fears, will be able to stand its Ground against him.

In this Judgment of the Author and his Performance, your Grace I think seemed positive as well as I. I apprehend, however, that we both think, that a full and just Confutation of all, or his principal Errors, is not a Task to be rashly and hastily undertaken by any one. It is perhaps too much for any single Person to undertake : *Non*

omnes possumus omnia; without good Helps, or an uncommon Stock of Erudition, whoever ventures upon it, can hardly hope to succeed. I do not think him invincible, but I think in many Cases there will be Difficulty in coming at him, and harder still to assail him: for he is not only expert but masterly in the Use of his Weapons, and where he attacks with the greatest Fierceness, is rarely wanting in the necessary Caution to guard and defend himself. Besides what in these Volumes we here see brought together, is apparently the Result of much Reading, long Labour, and intense Study: In collecting the Materials great Care, and a pretty accurate Choice has been, visibly employed, seemingly more in the manner of dressing and serving them up: And tho' it is a Cause, to which every Man, who has a clear Head, and a good Heart, may justly consider himself as summoned to its Defence: Yet as it is liable to suffer (as we have too often seen from past Experiments) by a weak, insufficient, or imprudent one, it will require for the Reasons I have mentioned to be warily, and at the same time very judiciously handled. The Author of the *Div. Leg.* can hardly, I apprehend, avoid shewing himself upon the Occasion, nor will such an Opportunity of exposing the Author's Paradoxes, and defending his own, I dare say escape him: But I question whether any but a *Sh——k* or a *C——re*, be sufficient for the Whole: Would either of these advance, this *Goliath*, I doubt not, would soon fall, and his Confederates all be forced to quit the Field: Whether this is to be expected your Grace is abler to guess than I. But I may be allowed to put it among the *Desiderata*.

There is, my Lord, no great Vanity in saying, that in most things I could clearly point out his
Errors;

Errors ; in more than I have undertaken, I should not despair of being able to confute them, but I have other Reasons besides Modesty (mostly a good Excuse) for declining a Task of such extent, and confining my self to a single Part ; if *Cudworth*, *King*, *Clarke*, and *Woolaston* were to the fore, however indefensible in some things they may severally be, particularly the third, they would have little Difficulty in dealing with him : On the Obligations of Morality, on the Evidences of Revealed Religion, the Immortality of the Soul, the Certainty and Necessity of a Future State for the Retribution of Sin and Virtue, and the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of Providence in the general Distribution of Good and Evil here, they would not, I believe, (your Grace I am confident believes the same) be much puzzled to defend themselves.

Well might the Author rail so much and so bitterly at Metaphysicks, for whatever else he excelled in, this was not a Province he should have chosen, he was by no means Master of it : Whether any one may ever arise competent to the Undertaking, with Ability to clear up, and rid these Questions of all the Difficulties they are involved in, is a Point problematical to Day, and may be so perhaps a hundred Years hence. It is a thing, I doubt, rather to be wished, than to be hoped : but from an Observation or two I shall presently make, it will be plain that our Author was by no means equal to it ; and if we are to rest in obscure, weak, and imperfect Accounts, we may as well, we may better, and more consistently with Duty, rest in such as do, as they are intended to do, give both Force and Evidence to Revelation and Religion, than in such as are intentionally calculated, and may possibly have some Effect in weakning them.

Metaphysicks, I own is the last Part of Science I would chuse to shew myself in, for this Reason, that it is, as your Grace well knows, and all they have found, who have gone farthest and deepest into it, a Field without Bounds or Enclosure ; a Well without a Bottom, or if it has a Bottom, always foul and muddy before you come near it.

Weak and unsized as I am to wade in such Depths, an Instance or two your Grace will indulge me in, and the candid Reader will not think it impertinent to shew, how slightly and superficially the Argument often passes under his Hands, even where he expatiates, and triumphs with most Eclat ; and with what Ease it might be sometimes turned against him, or the Difficulty so increased as to render it impossible for him to get out of it.

In Answer to Dr. Cudworth, who had said, “ that Things are by Nature what they are and “ not by Will.” He says * *That Things are what they are by immutable Natures which the Will of God hath given them, &c. That to say so, is more consistent with Theism.* But the Defenders of Cudworth’s Scheme, will still I presume be of Opinion, that it is to the full as consistent with Theism as his. For thus they might and probably would argue, that tho’ many things are mutable by the Will of God, which are immutable by the Will of Man : in Philosophical Strictness nothing is immutable, that was the Result of Will at first ; because the same Will that had Power to make, will always have Power to alter , and if the Will that made them,

* Vol. 5. p. 49.

may alter them *post factum*, the same Will might have constituted them differently *ante actum* : If the Partisans of this Author should reply to this, by saying, " That God's Will cannot change because " he acts necessarily," They will then be liable to be pressed with these consequent Absurdities, (1) That in God there is no Liberty of Will. And (2) that there is no Difference nor any Ground for Distinction between the Things themselves. Good, at that rate, might have been Evil, and Evil Good ; because there was no Congruity, no Fitness to determine the Will of God, to chuse one Constitution more than the other : Nay, my Lord, I suspect they would push the Consequences farther, and infer that Man was not made to act in Conformity to an unchangeable Law, but that Man was made first, and the Law fitted to him afterwards.

Let us follow him, my Lord, in this Instance a little farther : Arguing against *Hobbes* he says *, " We might as well say that *Columbus* discovered " a new World in the absolute, as well as relative " Sense of the Words, as to say, that when Men " distinguished between just and unjust, and " made Laws on that Distinction, they made that " to be just and unjust, which was indifferent before." Might not *Cudworth* and *Clarke* replied to this ? that the same Argument will hold against himself, when he opposes them ? for if just and unjust are not the Result of eternal immutable Relations, but began and existed only when God made the Distinction, and on that Distinction made Laws, the Conclusion would seem to be strongly in their Favour, that he made that just,

* Ibid p. 54.

which might have been unjust before, or at best was actually indifferent.

To help his Argument he adds, " That the natural Obligation to exercise Benevolence and administer Justice, is as evident to human Reason, as the desire of human Happiness is agreeable to human Instinct." But tho' *Cudworth* and *Clarke* agree with him in this, and would not stop to use the same Language, it will not help him out : because in Cases where these benevolent Affections have not Place, the Obligations are not evident to human Reason ; and as such Cases there certainly are, the Author without designing it, has formed an Argument in favour of Revelation : The Desire of Happiness, undoubtedly is agreeable to human Instinct, *i. e.* our own Happiness, not always that of others ; the selfish Principle is universal, the social not so ; there are Savages that have no such Affections, till cultivated by Discipline, or rather disciplined by Society ; and it may even then be a Question, whether what is thus only grafted on human Nature, might not be altered again or lost. Without going out of *Europe*, to Savage Nations, for Examples, we may see the most strong natural Affections, the most useful social ones, not only corrupted and depraved, but sometimes quite extinguished, by a corrupt and perverse Application of Religion.

Again ; the great Mistake he says of Mr. *Hobbes* was, " That he admitted a Rule, but not a Law of Nature : " * Now I could bring his favourite *Tully* to dispute with him ; that wherever we discover a Rule we discover a Law, but I chuse only to observe that *Clarke* and *Cudworth*

* Ibid. p. 88.

would prove against him that he was guilty of the very same Mistake, and that after all his Pains to keep clear of Mr. *Hobbes's* Scheme, he has unwarily run into it, and that the real Difference between them is in Fact only in Words.

Again, as this Author is sometimes very unlucky in his Arguments, so he is at others very unwary in his Expressions: He admits in one Place *
 " That Wisdom determines God all times to do
 " what is best upon the whole," this is not to be disputed, for it certainly does; but then I am confident your Grace will easily see, what Advantage *Cudworth* or *Clarke* would make of this Concession: for if God doth this always, he certainly did it at the Creation, his Wisdom operated in the same manner in making that it does in governing: and if he then did what was fittest, might not either of them aptly argue, that then there was a fitness to determine his Will. If infinite Wisdom, they would say, judged of the fitness, infinite Will did not make it: God does nothing without a Reason, Reason then was prior or antecedent to the Act of the Will: If there were two or more Possibles, God chose the best; but Election, or Judgment to determine between two or more Possibles, must be by Comparison: God therefore, they would say, chuses or judges by comparing of Ideas (which the Author flatly denies) and that the same is the Procedure of Man's Judgment, with this Difference, that Man judges erringly and imperfectly, he perfectly and unerringly: the Reason is he knows the Essences of Things, Man only the Properties and Qualities: His Knowledge comprehends the whole, Man's only a small Part; he is subject to no Bias, Man is: The Essences of Things must

* Ibid.

have existed before they could be compared, or ready for Judgment: if not the Essences of Things, at least the archetypal Ideas in the Divine Mind must, which they would maintain was the same thing: and so the whole of that Doctrine which he had pronounced impious and blasphemous, they would think established by his own Reasoning.

If your Grace is not tired with these *Difficiles Nugæ*, for indeed they are nugatory, at least in the Light that he has stated them, I will trouble you with one Instance more.

The Author observes, arguing with the same subtle Metaphysicians, "That moral Attributes must be known *a posteriori*, i. e. in the Works of God and in the Conduct of his Providence: but it is evident, says he, * they cannot be so discerned in them as to be the Objects of Imitation, and brings this Instance, that he makes his Sun to rise upon the Evil and Good, and sends Rain upon the Just and Unjust." what Answer may it be imagined *Clarke* or *Cudworth* would give to this? I fancy, my Lord, that they would reply, that these are Instances in general of Kindness and Beneficence; and in that View, and Sense imitable, though not in exact Manner and Proportion; that they gave us general Lessons of Duty, and tended to enlarge our Notions, which without reflecting on these Examples would be too narrow and partial: and that as they are Consequences arising from general Laws, and fixed Rules by which he governs, tho' we cannot always see the Equity of them, as we are so small a Part of that Whole; Yet that even in that Sense, they teach us this very useful Lesson, to bear with the Imperfections and

* Ibid. p. 63.

Faults of Individuals, when the good of a whole may be served or promoted by it; and not from peevish Resentment, or Malice refrain from Acts of Generosity and Kindness, by which Numbers of deserving People may be benefited, because a few unworthy Individuals might share in that Benefit: And farther, where the Administration of Justice is a Duty not to spare a Multitude of guilty Persons, because possibly a few innocent may happen unavoidably to suffer along with them.

Thus I imagine, my Lord, they would or might reply; and perhaps go on to comment upon the Case of *Sodom*, and explain the Equity of God's expostulating and promising at the Intercession of righteous *Lot*, for the sake of a few Righteous to save that City.

From these few, tho' slight Observations, it will be easily discernible, that this Author, with all his boasted Sagacity, is not impregnable, and that whoever will chuse to undertake him in this way, need not despair of being able to deal with him: The only discouraging Difficulty in his way, after pointing out his Mistakes, will be, to disentangle the Subject, from that disagreeable Perplexity, which an unaccountable Diversity in the Sentiments of Philosophers, antient and modern, has thrown over it, and of resting himself at last upon Grounds tenable and firm.

I confess to your Grace, that as often as I have examined, and very often I have examined, I never could find that Spot to rest upon, nor any Clue to guide me thro' the many Windings and Mazes, which, as soon as we enter, we are all necessarily involved in: Of the Subject in general we may say,
what

what *Origen* observed of St. *Paul's* Epist. to the *Rom.*
 “ The Structure is truly superb and magnificent,
 “ the Apartments grand and fine, and the Furniture
 “ choice and curious, but they are so many, at
 “ every Door, so many Turnings, such a Variety
 “ of Prospects that open to you, and necessarily
 “ distract your Choice, that the very Survey con-
 “ founds you, and you wonder whence you came,
 “ where you are, and how to get out.” No Man
 perhaps ever made a fairer Attempt to rid the Sub-
 ject of these Difficulties, than the learned and in-
 genious Author of the Translation and Notes upon
 that excellent Work of Archbishop *King*, *De Orig.*
Mali. But after the closest Attention to what the
 Author had said, finding the Difficulty instead of
 lessening always to increase, that as one was an-
 swered and removed, a new one always started up,
 and presented, I at last gave over the Chase as fruit-
 less and vain, resolved to puzzle my Brains no
 more about it. A Metaphysician, my Lord, as
 Mr. *Whiston* observes †, is never at a Loss for a
 Distinction to get out of an Absurdity, as often as
 you think you have caught him : however home,
 or judiciously you push at him, he will still parry
 and evade you ; and hence I have imagined, that
 the Difficulty now so great, arose primarily, not so
 much from the subject itself, as from the manner
 of handling it, and the Resolution the Combatants
 seem severally to have taken, never to give Ground,
 nor suffer themselves to be vanquished or foiled.

This Comfort however we have that neither the
 Evidences, nor the Obligations of Religion can
 suffer by it : Under discreet Management, they
 have been of Use to confirm the one, and to raise
 and illustrate the other, but Necessity of them,

† Mem. Life of Dr. *Clarke*.

there is none ; all that we want we can do without them, more effectually and more securely than with them ; leaving them therefore to those who like and may chuse them, I shall now, with your Grace's Permission, proceed to the Task assigned.

In the Opinion of the Author, the Part I have chosen is the hardest, at least it is that, in which he proudly plumes, and seems to imagine himself secure : at entring I fondly hope to find it otherwise, and to acquit myself in such manner, that your Grace may have no Reason to blush for your Client, or to repent of the Patronage you have given him : If I fail, you will, and indeed my Lord, you ought to withdraw it : Imperfections undoubtedly it will have, and no Eye more ready to detect them, than your Grace's ; but a few will not destroy the Merit of a good Intention, and the quicker in discerning, the readier you will be to make the Allowances I shall want, you will say with your favourite Poet, *non ego paucis offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit, aut humana parum cauta natura.*

Preparatory to my main design, let me turn your Eye and your Thoughts to the short Text in my Title Page ; it may be necessary, it cannot be improper, to take as we go along, a general View of our Apostle's true Character and Portrait : If in the various copyings it has undergone, the Features are altered and become deformed, the Original is still amiable and fair, *Quo propius stes te capiet magis*, by stopping to examine, the Readers Affections, if they had wandered, may be brought back and reconciled.

The Picture, my Lord, is drawn from the Life, for it is the Apostle himself that speaks to you, and
it

it is of himself that he is speaking; a finer or a nobler Character if true, it will readily be owned cannot be; if it is suspected of Partiality, as coming from himself, the Suspicion will be removed by considering the Occasion, which invited and which forced him to speak in this manner.

Notwithstanding his Success at *Corinth*, in gathering and establishing a Church, and the high Admiration and Esteem he was held in there, he had not, it seems, been long from among them, till some new Teacher had raised up a Faction against him; and as is ever customary in all Competitions for Power or Reputation, had loaded him with several severe Calumnies and false Aspersions: What he here therefore says of himself, and in sundry other Passages of like Import, did not proceed from Vanity or Vain-glory; but in the View, and from a Design of vindicating himself from the Accusations of this false Teacher and Seducer, and his Partisans: Had he been writing to Strangers who knew nothing of him, but by hearsay, and perhaps had heard little more of him, than that there was such a Person, who under the Character of an Apostle of Christ, was very industrious to propagate his Gospel: or had he been writing Memoirs of his own Acts with the View of transmitting his Character to Posterity, to set it in a strong Light for the Admiration of Mankind; and instead of sending these Epistles to the *Corinthians* for his present Justification, had ordered them to be locked up, or communicated to a few select Friends only, not to be published till some convenient time, when it might be out of the Power of any one to confront or to contradict him; the Suspicion in either Case would not be ill grounded; but the Occasion and Design considered, that his Competitor was actually on the Spot,
ready

ready to confront, and disposed to withstand him if he could ; that his Appeal too, was to People sufficiently qualified to judge between them, and of their mutual Pretensions, and that in this City of *Corinth*, there were probably Numbers, who from their Attachment to his Rival, would gladly take the Advantage, and labour to expose him, if he offered any thing in his own Defence, that either was not strictly true, or wanted sufficient Notoriety ; no such Suspicion ought to arise, or if it arise ought to be entertained.

His Success, my Lord, is another very forcible Argument to lead us to this Belief : The Seducers he contended with were forced to give way, his Credit rose by the Competition, he triumphed in the Defeat of their Designs ; the Divisions they had made were healed ; they who had rashly separated, to form a different Party were reunited and restored to the Church ; which, if either they, or their Seducers had been able to convict him of any Falshood, any Insincerity, any improper, indirect, or indecent Measures ; he probably would have failed to accomplish. Had any Objection of this sort lain against him, we may, we must presume, in the Situation things stood, it would not have been past over ; he directly charges them upon this Head, is very frank and open in his Accusations, but even from his Defence, where such Objections must, and ought to have been considered, we see no Ground to infer, nothing from which it may be collected, that any such Charge had been brought against him : They knew him perfectly, his manner of Life, his way of teaching ; so fair, so inviting an Opportunity of impleading and of exposing him to Derision, Insult and Shame, had it been a Matter at all in their Power, we cannot therefore imagine would have slipped through their Hands, without some No-

tice, or Animadversion : Nothing of this Kind appears, the contrary in all Respects strongly does ; they were not able to deal, or to cope with him : He had Truth and Right of his Side, by the Evidence he gave of it, he prevailed ; even his first Epistle had overcome their Prejudices, had brought them in part to acknowledge their Error, to repent of their Rashness, to submit to his Directions : This happy Effect he takes notice of, with a kind of rapturous Joy in his second Ep. *For I write says he, none other Things unto you, than what you acknowledge, and I trust will acknowledge even unto the End, that we are your Rejoicing, even as also ye will be ours in the Day of our Lord Jesus.*

Your Grace need not be told, but the Reader may be farther desired to observe, that the Word we have rendered corrupt *, signifies literally *to traffick for Gain* : and so, the Sense will be, that he did not like the false Teachers, who set up against him, make Gain of their Godliness ; his View was to enrich them not himself : The Profession is pretty much the same, with what he testifies of himself in other Parts of this and the foregoing Epistle : Where he endeavours to prove his Sincerity by his Disinterestedness : for all his Labours he neither had, nor looked for any Reward ; *But that when he preached the Gospel he might make the Gospel without Charge, not to abuse his Power in the Gospel.*

Disinterestedness in Reality is one of the strongest, most satisfying Proofs that any one can bring of his Sincerity : if it does not prove a Man to be no Enthusiast, it certainly proves him to be no Impostor. In the way of worldly Wisdom, in the

* *καπηλεύοντες.*

common Methods of calculating, where political Views are consulted, and to be served, it is often, sometimes not unjustly, held in low account, but even where it is of least Use, and for that Reason, but slightly reputed, the Man's Sincerity will still be unquestionable : Where Gain is not to be had, or not proposed, or if to be had is rejected, he that to serve others submits to any extraordinary Hardships in his own Person, has an undoubted Right to their Confidence, to be received and treated as their Friend : if his Zeal and Ability to serve them are evident, Good-will, or Sense of Duty, must, can be the only Motives, that impel or persuade him.

Where then have we seen, where have we ever read of a Character that shines under the Force of this Advantage so strongly as *St. Paul's* ? his Right to a Maintenance from his Disciples indeed he pleaded ; he pleaded it by Reasons that will for ever be in Force, for the sake of those, who were at the time engaged, and afterwards to succeed, in the same Ministry ; at the same Time when offered, when pressed upon himself, he positively rejected it. *That Power*, over them which Nature recommended and Reason ratified, *he used not, but suffered all things lest he should hinder the Gospel of Christ*. In this general View nothing can be more amiable than the Character of this Apostle, (need I hesitate to say) that it must be respectable to every Man, whose Breast is warmed with the same laudable Sentiments, whose Disrespect to every thing sacred or good, is not previously determined, and resolved upon.

The Character which *St. Paul* had acquired among the *Corinthians*, the same he had in all the Churches he planted, and maintained where-ever

Christianity was professed for a Succession of Ages : His Contemporaries who knew him, and were perfectly informed of the Manner of his Conversion, and the unwearied Zeal with which he laboured the Conversion of others : They also who came next to him, and had the most authentic Accounts by Tradition or Writing of all his Acts, all agree, jointly and severally confirm by their Suffrage the Accounts of his own Pen : His Reputation for great Capacity, extensive Knowledge, humble and sincere Piety, has been universally acknowledged, and universally admired, in every Country and in every Age to which the Fame of his Acts hath been carried : His inoffensive unblameable Manners, his Integrity and Purity, his invincible Fortitude, and Firmness of Mind, his exemplary Patience in suffering, his exalted Sentiments of Generosity and Charity, his meek, placid, and placable Disposition, in short his whole Demeanor so holy and so harmless, with every Virtue that might endear, every Grace that could adorn, all confirm the Testimony of the Spirit given to *Ananias* in a Vision.

That he was a Vessel chosen of God, (and fitly chosen) to bear his Name before Gentiles, and Kings, and the Children of Israel.

After all, how odd must it sound, how amazing to hear ! that this Apostle from whom the greatest part of the World received their Christianity, was in Fact himself no Christian : Affirmed it has been, upon what Grounds will be presently seen ; but whether solid and true, or frivolous and false, it has the Air of Paradox, and more surprising, by coming from one, who after labouring to subvert every Principle upon which Christianity stands,

stands, has the Modesty (the Effrontery I should say) to rank himself under the sacred Banner, to assume the Name, and to contend for the Privilege of being a Disciple : For this Reason, though none other could be given, the Assertion we imagine will meet with little Credit ; because admitting him to be, what he ridiculously assumes, it is in a Sense that excludes every one besides ; Upon his Scheme, 'till this refined Writer had settled his Notions of Christianity, there has not been a single Christian in the World. If he was the first, without a Spirit of Prophecy we may venture to say he will be the last ; a Scheme that at one Dash strikes out of the Canon all the Books of the New Testament, except two Gospels, and after assenting in general to the Authenticity of their Accounts, rejects them again in single and separate Examinations, can never prevail or take place, however low he is pleased to set Mankind in the Scale of Being, however small a Portion of Intelligence he will allow him to have, however blind and weak Human Reason is, however depraved Human Nature in his Estimation, it has still, I presume, Light enough to see the Error of his Opinions, and Virtue enough to reject them with Disdain. Total Darkeness, universal Corruption, will be necessary to give Success to a Scheme, that robs Men of those Hopes, by which, the Good they enjoy is always doubled or improved, and the Evil they suffer as constantly removed and made less. Immortality is the Desire of Nature, and the Desires of Nature are not delusory or vain. They were implanted by infinite Wisdom, they will be satisfied by infinite Goodness. If the Author had no such Longing, his State, whitherto he is now removed, will be justly different from theirs who had.

Let me end with the Words of an antient Father, " Do I say he is damned: I do not. Do I
" say he is saved: I do not. I judge not, I promise
" not, I know not: but *si securus hinc exit, Ego*
" *non sum securus.*

My next Letter, my Lord, will begin with stating the Author's Objections; if I have detained you too long in this, I will endeavour hereafter to relieve you at more seasonable Intervals.



LETTER

LETTER II.

IN all the Productions of Human Wisdom there will ever be some Marks of Human Weakness : Things the most convenient and useful, liable to some Inconvenience, some Evil from Abuse.

Our Constitution Civil and Ecclesiastical, the Envy and Admiration of Foreigners, the best, and most perfect perhaps in the World, hath this very notable one, that it turns the Thoughts and Attention of our Countrymen too much and too often to theological and political Controversy.

This Inconvenience of late is become excessive, a kind of epidemic Phrensy has seized all Ranks, and Classes of People, has spoiled and corrupted the general Taste, and in a manner blotted out, buried, or absorbed all other Science : If no Incident should arise to check its Progress, a general Ignorance of every thing else, will ere long too probably succeed.

As disposed as our Countrymen are to think (and what in this case they think, many of them foolishly often say) that in respect of other Nations they stand like Giants beside Dwarfs, they so far outdo them : It is at this Day problematical, that by going on at our present Rate, in half a Century, or less, we

must either change our Language or go abroad to pick up as much Science, as may serve the Purposes of our common Professions. Because we can boast our *Bacon* in one Age, our *Newton* and *Locke* in another, who opened the Treasures of Knowledge, and carried the Human Intellect farther than even the Philosophers of *Greece* or of *Ægypt*. We seem to suppose (we act as if we did suppose it) that either those Treasures are exhausted, or that enough has been drawn out, and that we may for ever subsist upon the Stock they left us; not considering that the State of Science like the State of Religion is progressive, wherein by not going forward, we necessarily lose Ground, and go back.

What is so obvious ought not to seem strange; the Generality among us, I mean of those who read, have no other Resource to recur to in Search of Knowledge, but to the Productions of the Age they live in, they look for it not among the Dead, but among the Living: Yet how far back must one even now go, in the Hopes of finding in his Native Language, any thing that may improve his Mind, or that can give him any real Pleasure, and satisfactory Entertainment.

I consider myself at present not as speaking to your Grace, but to my Countrymen in general: to you it would not be necessary; for I am only enlarging upon a Hint you gave me, when you drew to my Remembrance that fine Passage of *Petronius*, where speaking of the low, degenerate, dying State of Learning in *Rome*, he so appositely describes its present State among us: “ Ut ideo ego
 “ adulescentulos existimo in Scholis Stultissimos
 “ fieri, quia nihil ex iis quæ in usu habemus, aut
 “ audiunt, aut vident, sed piratas cum catenis in
 “ litore

“ litore Stantes, & Tyrannos edicta Scribentes.—
 “ Qui inter hæc nutriuntur non magis Sapere pos-
 “ sunt, quam bene olere qui in Culina habitant.
 “ Pace vestra—Liceat dixisse primi omnium Elo-
 “ quentiam, perdidistis: Grandis, & ut ita dicam,
 “ pudica oratio, non est maculosa, nec turgida,
 “ sed naturali pulchritudine exsurgit, nuper ven-
 “ tosa isthæc & enormis loquacitas Athenas ex
 “ Asia (Angliam ex Gallia) commigravit; animos-
 “ que Juvenum ad magna surgentes, veluti pes-
 “ tilenti quodam sidere adflavit, simulque corrupta
 “ Eloquentiæ regula, stetit & obmutuit.”

Upon this Head, a noble Writer in the last Century, made loud Complaint; his Censure gave general Offence, and deservedly, for it was then unseasonable: We had then got into the Way of striking out useful Knowledge, by investigating Nature and the Works of God; for his Pertness he was chastised by many, by one particularly, who had a Right to do it, he was so much his Superior, both in Genius and Erudition*: But allowing, my Lord, that the Censure was unseasonable then, must not a Man be blindly partial, who will stop to confess that it is seasonable now?

“ Thus Science dwindles whilst our Volumes
 “ swell.”

The ingenious Author of this Expression meant something more than to vaticinate: The Plague, at the Time he said it, was in fact begun; and the Extravagance to which it has since raged, is proved, very disagreeably proved, by the excessive Swarm of trifling silly Books that fill our Shops: That they are bought and read, is also a Proof how deplorably our Taste is corrupted.

Whe-

* Dr. Berkley.

Whether such a Restraint of ~~Liberty~~ as might check the Growth of this Evil be possible, or if possible, might be adviseable, I presume not to say: An Attempt to restrain it, if it did not succeed, would certainly do some hurt, possibly more if it did. Our Constitution is tender and delicate, and by tampering with it, we might do no more than Physicians in dealing with our natural one too generally do, prove that we were very knavish, or very ignorant, or both: But still we have right to complain, we suffer so much by the Abuse: One, not the lowest, nor least disagreeable Consequence of it, is the Situation we are driven to; we live as it were in an hostile Land, or like People perpetually at War with potent Neighbours, obliged constantly to be under Arms, and upon the Watch to defend our Frontiers from Invasion: The Ministers of State, and the Ministers of Religion, both are so beset, their Time and their Attention so much, and so necessarily taken up, in watching and defending their respective Wards, that they are precluded from attempting any Thing great or noble; their Senses and their Powers are all blocked up; they can look no farther, yet find full Employment.

To this unhappy Effect, no one in the different Stages of his Life contributed more than our Author: In what Part of his Life and Character, as a Statesman, or an Author, he eventually did his Country most hurt, is not easy to decide: After an ineffectual Struggle to correct, in his Sense, one Part of the Constitution, he set himself openly to subvert the other: from being a Traytor to his Prince, he turned Apostate to God, and died, as his favourite Poet somewhere has it, *Sad Outcast of both Church and State*; what Employment he
gave

gave the Ministers of State in one Stage is well known; how much the Ministers of Religion have now by his Means, on their Hands, every Reader perhaps cannot compute; what lies before me is but a Sample, and a small one: But, since thus it is, and thus for a Time it is like to be, we must, my Lord, contentedly do the best we can; though the Storm is great, though the Waters rage and swell, and the Boisterousness of the Billows necessarily raise some Affrightment, yet the Lord of Hosts is with us, he is our Hope and Strength; under this Hope we may contentedly, nay, we may chearfully struggle on: whilst we are tugging at the Oar, your Grace, with a steady Hand, will direct the Helm, and, by our joint Care, we shall in the End, I trust, both save the Passengers and preserve the Ship.

It is now Time, your Grace will say, to proceed to my Task, and state the Objections: It is so; and shocking and offensive as the Language in which he has delivered himself must needs be to every pious Ear, I shall chuse to give them to the Reader in his own Words, that his Partisans may have no reason to complain of wrong done him.

“ After saying so much of the unintelligibility
 “ of *St. Paul's* Gospel, Truth, says he, authorises
 “ me to add; That where it is intelligible, it is
 “ often absurd, or prophane, or trifling: Is not
 “ the Doctrine of passive Obedience, which he
 “ teaches, most intelligibly absurd? Is not that
 “ of absolute Predestination most intelligibly pro-
 “ phane? Is not one of them repugnant to com-
 “ mon Sense? Is not the other as repugnant to
 “ all the Ideas of God's moral Perfections? Would
 “ not either of them be sufficient to shake the
 “ Credit

“Credit even of Christ’s Gospel, if they were contained in it?”

He had before affirmed and laboured to prove, that *Paul* preached a new and a different Gospel from what Christ had preached; and, in other Places, charges him with Hypocrisy, and temporising against Principle: So that in the whole, we have no less than five Objections to consider and to answer.

I. That St. *Paul* preached a new and a different Gospel from what Christ and the other Apostles had preached.

II. That the Doctrine of this Gospel, where it is intelligible, is absurd.

III. That it is prophane.

IV. That it is trifling.

V. That he was a temporising and a dissembling Hypocrite.

Taken altogether, the Charge we must own, my Lord, is heavy, and the Matter of it very important: But we have this to cheer us, that if the Evidence is not incontestable, it cannot be thought sufficient: we have Prescription of our Side, and Rights by Prescription, even Lawyers do say, cannot be lost by Allegations from Hearsay or Surmise.

As your Grace prudently cautioned, I will examine it with Care, and I will examine it with Impartiality: If it turns out to be insufficient and weak, our Religion will be in no Danger of being shaken; for though I do not think that our Religion

gion stands altogether upon the Credit and Authority of this Apostle, yet I plainly think, that his Authority helps both to confirm and set it off. He was not the Foundation or Corner-stone, but was of great Use and Ornament in the Building: If his Agreement and Consistency with the Prime Builder and his Fellow-labourers is made out, the Epithets of *absurd*, *prophane*, and *trifling*, will recoil, and lie justly against those who brought, and who defend the Objections.

I. The Evidence upon which the first Article of the Account rests, amounts to no more than this, "That St. *Paul* confesses the Fact, by calling the Gospel he preached his Gospel * *εὐαγγέλιον μου* My Gospel."

We must follow him, as he is pleased to lead us; but if he had not so distinctly remarked this, and insisted upon it, it would not be worth considering.

That St. *Paul* has used this Phrase, and that in three different Places †, we allow; but what Harm was either intended, or could follow, we are not able to conceive: And I much question whether even this severe Critic, would have apprehended, or thought of the Inference, if a Mistake of Mr. *Locke*'s had not helped him to it, and given him the Hint. He indeed says §, that St. *Paul* cannot be supposed to have used the Expression, unless he knew that what he preached had something in it that distinguished it from what was preached by others: We shall presently see this was not the Case; but admitting it for the present; why, my Lord, might it not have something to distinguish it from what others

* Vol. IV. p. 323.
§ On Rom. xvi.

† Ep. Rom. Galat. & Tim.

others preached, without subjecting it to the Suspicion of Forgery, Falshood, or Inconsistency? If he had not imagined, that the Credit of that great Man would have given some weight to an Opinion that suited his sceptical Turn, he would never have caught at a Remark in itself so frivolous, and so insignificant.

If *St. Paul*, by this Expression, intended any Particularity, it could only be to put his Readers in mind of a Thing that indeed deserved their notice, and necessary on Account of his former Character, for him frequently to mention, *viz.* the Manner of his Appointment, and the Method in which the Gospel was communicated to him.

He was the Person from whom the *Romans* and *Galatians* had received it; and *Timothy* was his own dear Son in the Lord: To them he was the first, the only one, who, perhaps, had brought the Glad-tidings: upon his Authority they had received it: to them therefore it was not improperly his Gospel. It is a Way of speaking, probably not uncommon then, even at this Day not unusual, to call any Thing ours of which we are the principal Promoters, though we are merely the Instruments of conveying it: It is ridiculous to cavil at a Form of Speaking, when the Meaning is generally understood: Such Cavillers would possibly, they might I am sure as reasonably affirm, that the Gospel was not Christ's own, because he came and was sent to do the Will of his Father: He might with the same Reason be said to have set up a distinct independent Kingdom of his own, renouncing and disavowing his Father's Supremacy, when he said: *My Kingdom is not, &c.* In the Sense of this Writer, his directing his Disciples to pray to their Father in Heaven, that his Kingdom might come, would

would not serve to acquit him ; since repeated Acknowledgments, of like Import, and to the same Effect, will not with him acquit St. *Paul*.

It is in conformity to this Mode of Speaking, that we call those Histories of the Acts and Sermons of Christ, the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, &c. the Sense of which is never mistaken, though the Impropriety of the one is equal, or greater than of the other. All that it imports is, that the Authenticity of one depends upon the Credit of the other ; his Meaning could be no more than to certify, that the Gospel they had received from him was genuine and true.

Let us consider the Words how they stand in the Epistle to *Timothy* : Remember that Jesus Christ, of the Seed of *David*, was raised from the Dead according to my Gospel : Was it a new or a different Doctrine from what Christ, or the other Apostles, had preached ; that Christ, of the Seed of *David*, was raised from the Dead ? Is there any Particularity in this to distinguish it from the rest ? Did not all the Apostles teach that Truth as well as *Paul* ? How then could he mean more than to intimate, that though the Truths were the same, yet that he had come to the Knowledge of them in a different Manner ? That he received it not, as he explains himself, of Man, nor was taught it by Man, but by special Revelation from Christ himself.

If then he had it by Revelation from Christ, it was undoubtedly Christ's Gospel ; His Mission therefore must be disproved, and the Manner of his Conversion shewn to be false, and a Trick, before it can be proved that his Gospel was a new or a different one from Christ's. This Part of the Argument, I may pass over, because it is not attempted :

tempted : Could we even suppose that he was an Impostor, he was necessarily to go along with the rest ; and his Doctrine must be framed to coincide with his Masters, or the Imposture could not be carried on ; any material Difference would have marred the Plot ; to have disowned Christ his Head, and to set up for himself, was an Undertaking too arduous and dangerous to be attempted with any Hopes of Success ; no pretended Revelation would have born him out in it ; such Pretensions would have been easily, quickly exposed, as happened to false Christs afterwards ; his Credit had been ruined, his Scheme irrecoverably defeated by it.

Still more than this may, my Lord, be observed : To prove that what *Paul* taught and called his own, was a new or a different Gospel from Christ's, it should be shewn, that in some essential or necessary Matter he had either altered or corrupted the Doctrine of Christ : that he had either changed the Conditions of his Covenant, or added new ones : that he had proposed new or different Terms of Grace or Reconciliation : new Conditions of future and final Happiness, any other Name, Method, or Manner by which Men might be saved : except by Faith and Obedience.

Hath this been attempted ? Your Grace knows it hath not : Could this be done, if it were attempted ? Your Grace also knows it could not : The Terms are every where the same, the Means and the Motives both the same, in one as in the other : It was Christ crucified, and Christ raised from the Dead, that he only did preach : Christ he acknowledges the Head ; he, and the other Apostles, in his Account, were only Members of that Body ; they were Ministers and Servants,
Christ

Christ was Lord of all: *Paul*, *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, at the highest, were but Instruments by whom the Disciples believed.

In his Name they beseeched, they persuaded; but the Church was God's Husbandry and God's Building. They were not baptised into the Name of *Paul*, nor was *Paul* crucified for them: Pursuantly he exhorted them to be Followers of him, as far only as he was of Christ; as they had all the same Rule, that they should all mind the same Thing.

How then! Would any one imagine, that all I have been saying is, in effect, in few Words acknowledged by the Writer who raised and who urged the Objection? Your Grace will not doubt of it, because you have read it: If others may, let them attend to him speaking for himself. *Paul's Gospel was, in the fundamental Principles of it, the same as the others.* How is this? Are Things that agree in their fundamental Principles and Properties different Things? What Nonsense! It might as well be said, that *Peter* and *Paul* were not the Servants of the same Master, because they were sent at different Times, or to different People; or that different Copies of the Gospel of *Matthew* were not the same Gospel, because at one Time written in *Hebrew*, and at another in *Greek*. If that logical Axiom will hold any where, it will hold here; "Quæ conveniunt in uno tertio, conveniunt inter se:" By the above Concession they did more, they agreed in all that was fundamental.

But still there was an observable Difference. In what? Not between St. *Paul* and Christ, but between him and the rest of the Apostles: And what was this Difference? It was in their Style he

tells you, and Manner of Writing: " One has
 " the Air of Modesty and Gentleness, is short, fa-
 " miliar and simple, like that of their Master; the
 " other has a Profusion of Words, involved and
 " unconnected Discourse, and that assuming Air,
 " that is apt to accompany much Learning *."

Very notable truly! But what has this to say to the Doctrine? Might they not, for all this, have been led by the same Spirit that divideth to every Man severally as it willeth? Are Diversities of Gifts inconsistent with Sameness of Doctrine? Are a Profusion of Words, and an Appearance of Boasting indubitable Marks of Falshood, and incompatible with Verity? If so, the Reader will be at a Loss to find any Evidence of Truth in the Works of this Author: He will not even be suspected " of meaning to convince he has been at
 " such Pains to perplex." In regard of himself, his Objection seems true; when levelled at St. *Paul*, is absolutely false: We have, in fact, few Instances of such concise, strong, well-connected Reasoning, as in this very Epistle to the *Romans*: I doubt whether the same, or as much be to be found in any Author, antient or modern: Such Variety of Argument, such Propriety of Address, so extensive a Plan, in so short a Compass, such Quickness of Retort, such Conciseness and Clearness in stating and answering Objections, so many fine Instructions and Exhortations; in these Respects St. *Paul* has always been so much distinguished, and so much admired, and the Thing is so evident to all who read him with the Design of understanding him, that the Author could surely have intended no more by these Remarks, than to amuse himself, and impose upon his Readers. The Obscurity of this Epistle will be considered hereafter; at pre-

* Essay 4. V. 4.

sent,

sent, it is only necessary to observe that a Difference in Style is the only Difference between him and the rest of the Apostles, as will be seen more fully as we go on.

Commentators, my Lord, under whose Notice this very notable Remark hath fallen, say that the distinguishing Difference between the original Gospel, and the Gospel of *Paul*, was the Mystery revealed in the Latter, of God's Purpose of taking in the *Gentiles* to be his People, without subjecting them to the Law of *Moses*: If the Observation were true, it would indeed sufficiently justify the Innocence of the Expression, and clear St. *Paul* of any bad Design in calling it his Gospel; but this the Author will not allow to have been the Difference.

* According to him, "the Thing about which *Peter* and *Paul* differed, (for to a personal Difference between them two, the Controversy is at last reduced) was not any Point of Doctrine essential, or fundamental in the Faith of a Christian; but only a Point of Discipline, about which Christ had given no positive Directions, consequently had left it to the Wisdom and Discretion of his Apostles to decide." But neither he, nor the Commentators referred to, seem to have apprehended the true State of the Question; what they have all said is meerly presumptive, and the Presumption quite groundless.

If either Mr. *Locke* or Mr. *Taylor* (for they are the Commentators I mean) had recollected what they have each with some Disagreement remarked upon the same Phrase in the 16th Verse of

the 2d Chapter, they had neither of them incurred this Mistake in their Notes on the 16th Chapter. In the first Instance Mr. *Locke's* Paraphrase is this, *as I make known in my preaching the Gospel*, as if the Apostle had intended to put them in mind, that he had made known a future Judgment in preaching the Gospel; but this, as the other observes, was not peculiar to *Paul* as Apostle of the Gentiles, for other Apostles had made known that as well as he.

The other (Mr. *Taylor*) is of Opinion, *that it refers to the Rule by which God will judge the Secrets of Men*. But there is Inaccuracy even in this, because it seems to intimate that no one before *Paul* had taught, by what Rule Christ would judge the Secrets of Men at last; a Peculiarity that would too much distinguish it from the rest, and perhaps argue some Imperfection even in the original Gospel, at least it would justify Mr *Locke's* Observation in the latter Instance, where the Expression is repeated.

This eternal Purpose of God to call the *Gentiles* to be his People, most Expositors agree, and their Reasons oblige me to go along with them, was the Purport of many of our Saviour's Discourses; particularly of two Parables recited by St. *Matthew*; that of the Labourers in the Vineyard, and that of the Marriage Feast, both which end with these remarkable Words, *for many are called, but few are chosen*. If Expositors had not pointed out this Meaning, it is too obvious to escape any one. They plainly refer to this Purpose of God, and to nothing else, the Sense is too clear to be liable to Misconstruction.

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If then, this Purpose of God was in fact revealed by Christ, it proves both against the Commentators mentioned, that this was not the Particularity, on account of which St. *Paul* called the Gospel he preached, his Gospel, and likewise against the Author of the Objection, that the Matter in Dispute between him and *Peter*, was something more than a Point of Discipline left by Christ to be decided by the Discretion of his Apostles. If the Dispute between *Paul* and *Peter* was, whether the *Gentiles* were to be received into the Faith of Christ, as at first it seems to have been, the Point will be clear in St *Paul*'s Favour, and the Difficulty will only be to account, whence *Peter*, who had so constantly attended his Master, and heard all his Sermons, came to misapprehend his Meaning, and to be so long in the Dark, about a Mystery so plainly revealed, as to require a Miracle, much of the same Nature with that wrought for the Conversion of *Paul*, to convince him, that the calling of the *Gentiles* was the Purpose of God revealed by Christ in his Discourses to the *Jews*.

Odd, my Lord, it is indeed! and would be unaccountable if Examples of this sort were not so frequent in the World, of Men blinded by prejudice against the plainest Truths. *Peter* was a *Jew*, and the same Prejudice that blinded him, had infatuated the whole Race; even Miracles could not extirpate or remove them; satisfied that the Promises of God belonged only to the Seed of *Abraham*, they continued even after the Crucifixion of their Master, to dream on of a Kingdom to be restored to *Israel*, neither their own Reasoning upon the Attributes of God, nor the Scriptures of the Prophets, nor both these illustrated by the Sermons of Christ, could convince them of that fun-

damental immutable Doctrine of all Religion, "That all Men are capable of inheriting the Promises who are duly prepared by Righteousness and the Fear of God," * till it was extorted from him by a Miracle, that he could not resist. But however *Peter's* Blindness and Obstinacy is accounted for, from this Relation of the Fact it is evident, that *Peter* coming to the first persuasive Knowledge of this Mystery by particular Revelation as well as *Paul*, in his Epist. to the *Gentile* Converts, had as good a Right to call it his Gospel, as *Paul* had, only with this Difference, that the Revelation to *Paul* was prior and antecedent to that made to *Peter*, and hence the Privilege of calling it his, may be thought with some Propriety to belong to him: In strictness of Truth, it was neither his nor *Peter's*, but Christ's own, who by the foregoing Account had preached the same Doctrine.

Upon the whole, the Phrase *κατα Ευαγγελιον μου*, neither had, nor could have any other Meaning, than this common obvious one, *according to the Gospel as I have preached it unto you*: We have the same Sense in no unsimilar Phrase at *Gal. 1. 11*, *Ευαγγελιον το Ευαγγελισεν υπεμου*, The Gospel which was preached of me: so in his first and second Epistles to the *Thessal.* he calls it, *Ευαγγελιον ημων*, our Gospel, including his Fellow-Labourers. In the Sense of this Writer therefore, and to support his

* I have purposely expressed this in Dr. *Sherlock's* Words, because it is undoubtedly the Sense of St. *Peter's* Words, and gives me an Opportunity of recommending to every one who may happen to read this, those excellent Discourses of his lately published, which with his other Works, prove him to be the clearest, strongest Reasoner, and best Writer of the Age. *For this see Dis. 12. v. 1.*

Ar-

Argument, if all the Apostles had wrote Epistles to the Gentiles, whom they had been the Instruments of converting, and had called the Gospel they taught their Gospel, they would all have been new and different ones from the original.

What poor flimsy Stuff is this? what solemn but absurd trifling; how unbecoming a Philosopher, and a Critick? How unworthy the Notice of any Man of Sense; what Weight the Author's Name, and general Reputation may give it, is hard to say, were it not, that it may possibly give some, I should indignantly look back at the Pains I have taken in considering it. The Character of *St. Paul* cannot surely suffer by it, even in his Hands, who that is capable of reading his Bible can be staggered by it.

There is however, your Grace will observe, a designed Fallacy in the Account given of this Matter; by blending and confounding two things that are quite different, *viz.* the purpose of God in calling the *Gentiles*, and their Exemption from the *Mosaic* Law. This is plainly done with the View of imposing upon his Readers. By his Account both together make up the Mystery, then pluming himself in this Refinement, he sneeringly adds, "*if this was the Mystery, Peter and the rest of the Apostles, treated it as no Mystery at all.*"* But this, like many other Things advanced by him, is without Foundation, and absolutely false: If the Mystery was no more than the Purpose of God in calling the *Gentiles*, and it plainly was no more, for it had been shewn, that even after the calling of *Paul*, this was still a Mystery to *Peter*.

* Essay 4. v. 4.

When he says again that the Mystery was explained by the Decree of the Council at *Jerusalem*, the Fallacy intended is more palpable ; for the Point explained by the Council at *Jerusalem*, was only the Exemption of the *Gentile* Converts from the *Mosaical* Law, which was no Part of the Mystery at all, but might be as he calls it, a Point of Discipline referred to the Discretion of the Apostles to decide ; and yet we may observe, that even this Explanation was not made, till after *Paul*'s Conversion, and if the Mystery had not been particularly revealed to *Peter*, as well as to him, it is probable no such Decree had ever been made or thought of.

But here, my Lord, the Author comes upon us with some arch Interrogatories, of which Notice must be taken, because they are set off with such an Air of Triumph.

“ Why was the Revelation of this important
 “ Mystery so necessary to be published at the very
 “ first publication of the Gospel, if it was the
 “ eternal Purpose of God ; or else, not necessary
 “ at all, reserved for St. *Paul*, who was then a
 “ Persecutor, not a Preacher of the Gospel, and
 “ whose Apostleship did not begin before the Con-
 “ versions. *

To answer this we need neither say, as he would have us to say, that this Purpose was not known to the Son ; or if known, that he neglected to communicate it to the first Preachers of the Gospel, and so gave them imperfect Instructions ; because from Christ's own Discourse it is evident, as I have

* Ibid. p. 325.

already observed, that the Son both knew of this Purpose of God, and likewise had not only communicated it to his Disciples, but had warned the *Jews* in general of it: The imputed Blasphemy and Prophaneness, falls not therefore upon those who acknowledged and who believed this Mystery when revealed to them, nor upon those who have acknowledged and defended it since, but upon himself and others, who raise Objections, where in Fact there is no Difficulty, and complain, and cavil at the Dispensations of Providence, because they do not, or rather because they will not, understand them. For after all, if we may presume in our Turn to catechise this presumptuous Sophist: If all that he has said could be supposed, why might there not be sufficient Reasons, tho' our weak Understandings could not fathom or see into them, that the Divine Wisdom, should for a while keep this Purpose a Secret from both, and not reveal it sooner? The infinite God had reserved the Hour and Day of Judgment we find, as a Secret from his Son during his Appearance in the Flesh, with respect (at least as we are used to distinguish) to his Human Nature, are we therefore presumptuously to enquire into the Reasons of that Council of God? We can assign conjecturally at least, some probable Reasons why the Discovery might have been unseasonable or improper in the one Case; why then might we not have so much Modesty, as to infer, that in the other also there might be sufficient Reasons, to have made an earlier Discovery both unseasonable and improper.

Some, my Lord, you well know, might be assigned, but I chuse to rest the Point upon this: The Question that concerns us is not why this Mystery was not revealed sooner, but when it is revealed,

revealed, is the Revelation duly attested? if it be, in the Confession of our Author (if what he says at any time may be depended upon) all further Inquiry may be reasonably suspended: This Principle he often admits, but the Application of it he never allows, but when his own Purposes may be served by it. Let me recal to your Grace's Thoughts one Instance out of many unwarily scattered thro' his Works. "The Divine Master" tells us no more than he judges it fit we should "know, and every Step we attempt to make beyond his exprefs Revelation, and on our own Strength, is a Step we make in the Dark, exposed to err, and sure not to know." *

In Sum, it can be no Objection to the Expediency or general Usefulness of a Revelation, that it was not given to *James*, or *Peter*, or *John*, before or in Preference to *Paul*. Whoever was appointed first to this Honour, and to this Labour, it made no Difference in respect of those who were to share in the Benefits of the Dispensation.

Impatient as I am to relieve your Grace from the Fatigue of too long Attention at once, and that in my own Opinion, I might safely leave him here, and proceed to his next Objection, yet I must beg to be indulged a few Moments longer, to clear up and satisfy an Objection that may be thought to lie against some Part of the Preceding Argument, as it has been more than once hinted by the Author.

I have observed, my Lord, that the Purpose of God to call in the *Gentiles* to be Partakers of his Grace in the Gospel, was a Point spoken of by

Christ

Christ in his Discourses to the *Jews* : How then it may be asked are we to understand his Words upon another Occasion, of himself first : *That he was sent only to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*, and next in charging his Disciples, “ *not so much as to enter into any City of the Samaritans, nor into the Way of the Gentiles ;*” and how does this consist with the Commission given to the Disciples after his Resurrection, *to go and to teach all Nations*. Our Author tells you, that the only Solution of this Difficulty, the only way to make Christ consistent with himself, is to suppose, “ that his Meaning in the Latter was only to go to the dispersed among all Nations.” *

In my Apprehension the Difficulty of reconciling them is very little : This Purpose of God we say, was revealed both to the Son, and by the Son : It does not therefore follow, that this Purpose was to be immediately executed, and to take place as soon as it was revealed : To the *Jews*, by prior Compact belonged the Promises, they were to have the first Tender of Grace and Salvation ; Time therefore necessarily must be had to make Trial of their Faith and Obedience, whether they would close with the profered Mercy, or whether they would reject it. Had the first Commission been general to *Jews* and *Gentiles* without Distinction, the former he foresaw would have taken Offence, and immediately have concluded without waiting for the Evidence of his Works, that he was a false Prophet, and had no Right to be considered, as the promised Messiah, it was necessary therefore to deprive them of this Pretence, yet at the same time to warn them of the Event, if they stood out, and were obstinate ; Christ did both,

* Vol. 4. p. 328. Note at the Bottom, and p. 305.

and in so doing acted very consistently : If he had not done the first, he had contradicted the Scriptures of the Prophets, and the Writings of *Moses*, to which he was obliged to refer, and in which they looked for their Messiah ; if he had not done the latter, he had contradicted the Purpose of God, in sending him into the World.

This Account is confirmed by *Paul* and *Barnabas*, in the Disputes they held with the *Jews* at *Antioch*, *Acts* 13. 46, 47. *It was necessary*, they said, *that the Word of God should have first been spoken to you, but seeing you put it from you, Lo ! we turn to the Gentiles, for so hath the Lord commanded us.*

As by this Account Christ is made consistent with himself, and the Apostles with Christ, so the Scheme of Providence displayed in it as far as it is displayed, seems in no Respect unworthy of God.

To represent him as sedulous, on his Part, to save and bring in the *Jews*, and even scrupulously exact in performing Promises made in his Name, presents to our Thoughts strong, and very rational Motives to Faith and Obedience : Good, and valuable Ends too, had been served by it, had it succeeded in the Way first designed and attempted : Instead of throwing any Difficulty in the Way of his future Purpose of taking in the *Gentiles*, it would have rendered that more sure and easy. This Event would have cured the *Jews* of all their Prejudices, as the other left them inexcusable : That particular Prejudice of the Immutability of their Law, that it was to continue for ever, it necessarily must have removed ; and such a Proof of a settled Scheme of Providence in the Effect, and Regularity of its Operations, would, must have been, of
the

the greatest Use in persuading others to come into the Fold of Christ. But the *Jews* were obstinate, and by their Obstinacy frustrated the Designs of God for their good; his End, in respect of the *Gentiles*, they could not, it succeeded and took place. If this Author had followed his own Advice*, and “forbore to pry over curiously into the “secret Dispositions of Providence,” we should neither have been troubled with his Objections, nor your Grace with this too tedious Epistle.

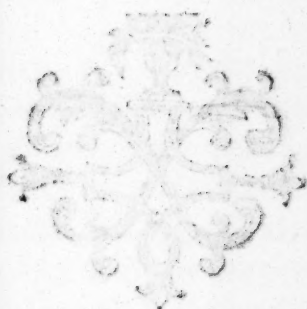
* V. IV. p. 281.



L E T T E R

the great life in nature, which to come into
the light of Christ, they were obliged to
and by their Obedience, rendered the Deities of
God for their good; but that, in respect of the
Gentiles, they could not be instructed and took
place. If this Author had followed his own Ad-
vice, "I should have preferred carefully into the
"fence of the Deities of the Gentiles," we should
neither have been troubled with his Opinions,
nor have come into the same tedious Errors.

• NINE •



L E T T E R III.

IN our Controversies with Infidels, we have rarely much Force or Evidence of Reason to contend with: Bold and confident Assertions, set off in a Pomp and Glitter of Words, for the most Part is all that is terrible in them. These tinsled Appearances often deceive; they warm the Imagination, they tickle, and they please it; in which State the Mind is easily seduced, and where it is, however far it may be led astray, it will be confident that Reason leads, the Deception may be too strong for it to disentangle itself, and find its Way back.

As far as these combined Properties can propagate their Scheme, the Writer before me bids fair for Success; in this consists his principal Merit, in this he seems to found too his principal Glory: His Predecessors and Contemporaries will all yield him the Palm; and possibly no succeeding Age may ever raise another who may have a Right to contend it with him. If Candor and Modesty should grow again into Fashion, should recover the Esteem they are intitled to, the extravagant Boldness of his Assertions will make him ridiculous; the Weakness and Insufficiency of his Arguments will make him contemptible.

It is impossible, my Lord, to read this Author, without feeling from the Struggle of opposite contending Passions: Pleased we necessarily are with his Manner, displeased we as necessarily are with his Insolence, and with Pity behold such fine Parts so misapplied and so prostituted: Misapplied to a Study, in which he could not hope for Mastery, by entering so late he could only skim superficially; and prostituted to Purposes, that could serve to no Good: For what Good, in the Situation of these Kingdoms, can arise from unsettling the Notions of our Countrymen, either of Religion or Government, I may safely defy any Man to point out: To prune, or to dispose in better Order the Branches of a Tree, the Root need not feel the Violence of a Hand or a Knife; some few Alterations, is the most that either, is pretended to want: In the Opinion even of our Author, and his Opinion may hereafter be of use, both come as near to Perfection as any thing of the Kind can be supposed to come.

Even in that Part of the Argument, which the Author has laboured with most Skill, and perhaps with most Success, he seems to me, my Lord, to lie very open to attack: From the Argument of a universal Tradition, he has sufficiently, we may say, proved, that the World had a Beginning; and, as this coincides with the *Mosaic* Account, and gives it an Advantage that he did not intend, Believers in this will bear with him, and give it its proper Weight; but then I suspect they will be apt to improve it to a farther Use, and to serve Purposes, that he, with Sorrow would be ministerial to: In short, that under skilful Management, it will go far, to clear up the Original of Sacrifices, and possibly to strengthen the Evidence of Miracles; for after all his Pains to guard against this
very

very Inconvenience, by distinguishing so nicely between Tradition of a Fact and Tradition of Opinion, they will unreluctantly join Issue with him; and imagine themselves secure of Success, when they have proved, as they easily may, that both are Traditions of Fact.

This has no immediate Connection with the general Subject of these Letters, but as I hint but briefly what I would be at, your Grace will not think me impertinent, if I take one Step farther, to shew how the Argument may be turned against him, in another Instance.

He admits, more than once, the Authenticity of the Gospels; and tells you, that Christianity, as contained in them, is the Word of God, and deserves Veneration and Respect: If as often as he has said this, he did not in effect retract it, by arguing inconsistently with that Concession, it might be of use in reconciling Differences between us and Infidels; but from him it is nothing: And he goes on to tell us, "That artificial Theology *, grounded on Tradition, the Writings of Fathers, and Decrees of Councils, deserve neither †;" he is aware, that he may be called to account for this; and for this adds, that destroying the Authority of the Fathers, does not destroy the Authenticity of the Gospels: "For the Gospels, says he, are not admitted upon the Testimony of the Spirit, as Calvin did; but upon the Doctors and Fathers of the Church, separately first, and conjunctly again in Councils; on the Council of *Laodicea* particularly, which rejected many, and made a

* By artificial Theology under Christianity, the Author means Doctrines derived from the Writings, and supposed to stand upon the Authority of St. Paul.

† V. 4. p. 632.

“ Canon of the rest, and that we may receive
 “ these as well upon this Testimony, as the Books
 “ of the Old Testament upon the Credit of the
 “ *Jews*, after rejecting their oral Law, and the
 “ Traditions of their Rabbins.”

Now, my Lord, how far his Argument will hold against Mr. *W——n*, against whom it is levelled, we are not obliged, nor could not inquire without digressing too long. But we are to consider, whether it do not conclude against himself; 1st, When he rejects both the Authenticity and Authority of the Old Testament: And 2dly, When he admits the Authenticity of one Part of the New, and so boldly rejects all the rest: For, as far as I can see, the *Jewish* Rabbins may be as good Vouchers in one Case as the Fathers in the other: And I can see but two Choices that we have in the latter; either with *Calvin* to admit the Testimony of the Spirit, or to rest upon Tradition; *i. e.* upon the Authority of Fathers and Councils.

Now since he is pleased to allow, that the Authenticity of two Gospels will stand securely upon the latter; his Defenders, I conceive, will be extremely puzzled to shew why the other two should be rejected. His saying, that *Matthew* and *John* being Apostles, Companions, and Hearers of Christ, their Testimony must have more Weight than can be claimed to *Luke* or *Mark*, will not avail him, because it may be argued upon the Authority of *Origen* * and other Fathers, that though *Luke* and *Mark* were not of the Twelve, they were certainly of the Seventy, and so could not want competent Evidence of the Facts they attested: and I may observe to your Grace what bears directly against his Scheme, with regard to St. *Paul*. That *Luke* is in all Respects to the full as authentic

* Lib. de Principiis.

a Voucher

a Voucher for the Acts of the Apostles, particularly for the Truth of *Paul's* Conversion, as either *Matthew* or *John* are for the Acts of Christ; because he had the same requisite Qualifications, that in his Judgment, give Credit to the other.

There can be no Occasion for insisting upon such Points in writing to your Grace, who is so much a greater Master of the Subject; and I may be excused by others, who may happen to be my Readers; because I imagine there will not be wanting others to undertake him, more capable of considering the Subject in its full Extent, and who upon trial will not be found so stupid as he is pleased to call them.

I proceed therefore to consider this Instance our Author has singled out to prove that the Doctrine of *St. Paul* is intelligibly absurd.

The Instance chosen for this Purpose is, the Doctrine of passive Obedience: Upon which a Question arises, which he ought to have discussed and determined, before he ventured to pass this rash and unwarrantable Censure, *viz.* whether passive Obedience be in Truth a Doctrine of *St. Paul's* or not.

About the true Sense and Interpretation of the 13th Chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*, whence this Doctrine has been deduced, great Controversies have subsisted; some of them too recent to be yet forgotten: His Sense we all know has been tortured and strained, to speak on both Sides what the Inclinations or Interests of the contending Parties required: The Abettors of absolute Monarchy will have him of their Side, and the Advocates for Liberty of theirs: In no Country, where

Christianity has been the prevailing Religion, hath this happened so often as in our own; and that for a plain Reason, which it is not my Business to take notice of here. This no body knew better than the Author; the whole Controversy, with the Reasons of it, he was perfectly acquainted with: He had been a busy Actor in that Scene which gave rise to it at one time; and the Part he acted is a full Proof on which Side his Interest and Inclinations lay; however repugnant his Principles or his Judgment, as he has since thought fit to explain them, were.

But however Divines and Politicians, each studious to serve a Turn, by his Authority have split and divided upon the Subject; the Point, as far as is necessary, in Vindication of our Apostle, is capable of a fair and easy Decision.

There is a Sense wherein, my Lord, we may admit passive Obedience is very intelligibly absurd. And there is a Sense wherein we may also safely maintain that it is as intelligibly rational, and not only rational, but sound, salutary, indispensable, nay, if you will, indefeasible.

Whether it is a Doctrine suited to the original Genius and Plan of our Constitution, is a Question we must leave to Politicians; much has been said on both Sides: But after those remarkable Alterations it underwent in the Æras of 1641 and 1688, it could neither be properly, prudently, or decently brought into Debate; since the last, the very Sound of it has been harsh and grating to *English* Ears; and, at this Day, it is universally, and indeed justly, exploded: I know it has been occasionally taken up since; many of us still living can remember how warmly it was urged by some of our

our Divines * in the Reign of Queen *Anne*, to what Extravagance two or three of them pushed it, and what Pains was taken, not only to prove it to be the Doctrine of *St. Paul*, but likewise of our own Church. Upon which I have only to observe, that in the same Sense in which it stands in *St. Paul*, it undoubtedly stands in the Homilies on Rebellion; and what that was will presently appear.

Grating as it is in Sound, I assert, nevertheless, that there is a good and saving Sense, in which it is both rational and fit to be taught by every Christian Divine: Because, in that Sense, it was taught by Christ and by *St. Peter*, as well as by *St. Paul*; by every Philosopher and Wiseman in the World, and must be still by every Man who wishes, or who means to promote, the Security and Prosperity of human Society. Societies cannot subsist without Government, Government cannot subsist, nor be preserved without an absolute, uncontrollable Power, somewhere residing in it: Whether the Form of Government be monarchical, aristocratical, or popular, it makes no Difference: Whether the supreme Power be in Judges or Kings, in a Sanhedrim or a Senate, in Archons or Emperors, it is all one: An absolute uncontrollable Power somewhere there must be, which no Subject conscientiously can resist, which no Subject, with Impunity, may or dare resist: Without it, Governors and Governed, would be alike insecure; the one would have no Stability, the other no Safety.

More of your Grace's Time need not be taken up in explaining the Notion, it has been often can-

* *Dr. Atterbury's* late Sermon before the Convocation, and two Sermons preached in the College of *Dublin*, by *Mr. Berkley*, since Bishop of *Cloyne*; and some others less remarkable.

vassed, it is generally well understood, nor is the Consequence I would deduce less evident : The Question then to be considered will be only this, Whether St. *Paul*'s Doctrine should be expounded, as importing this general, sound, and saving Sense, or accommodated to an Idea, that arises from the Consideration of some particular mixed Form, and applied in the manner in which Divines have occasionally, and unwarrantably applied it, to serve the as unwarrantable Purposes of their political Leaders, and Masters. If Tyrants and Usurpers have abused, and may again abuse this Doctrine of St. *Paul* (every Incroacher upon the Rights of others will be glad to shelter themselves under his Authority) it will not follow that St. *Paul* intended this, or has given any Colour, Pretence, or Occasion for it : He is not to answer for the Excesses of Sensuality, for the Ravages of Ambition, nor for the Pranks of Hypocrisy : The Imperfections of particular Systems, the ill sorted Materials out of which they are moulded, the discordant unnatural Principles upon which they are founded, nor their unequal, impolitic, or unjust Administrations, are no Faults either in him or his Doctrine.

It is an Observation, my Lord, of this Writer's own, " That one great Cause of the Errors, and " Misfortunes of Mankind, is the Difficulty of " applying Generals, or even common Notions " to Particulars." * The Observation may be carried farther than he pointed, or designed it should go : It is not only difficult but impossible to frame general Precepts, and to conceive and express them in such Terms, that they shall be safely and easily applicable to Particulars. He speaks there of the Law of Nature from which, tho' false Deductions

* Vol. V. p. 154.

and Applications could not fail to be made, yet that they argued no Imperfection in the Law. Pray now, My Lord, is not the very same true of Revelation ? it must, it can consist of no more than Generals ; single out any Instance, and you will see both that is so, and how it is so. What false Deductions may be made from it, what wrong Applications of it, in an almost infinite Variety of Cases impossible to be foreseen, or provided for.

What then ! do these wrong Applications render the general Rule absurd, or the Precept irrational ? surely they do not ; if they did, then even the Law of Nature would have that Imperfection, which he wanted to clear it of. If at one time the Doctrine of *St. Paul* has been strained to serve the Purposes of Tyranny, and at another the Purposes of Faction and of Sedition, it proves nothing either against the Doctrine, or the Preacher ; should the Value of the one, or the Credit of the other suffer by it ?

Had the Design of Christ been to erect a new Kingdom, or to found a new Commonwealth, to serve as a Model or Standard to the World, his Laws would undoubtedly have been relative, and born Respect to that Design ; they would have been suited to the Genius and general Plan of Government instituted by him, and this Institution and Institute had been both somewhere to be found in his Discourses ; for his Disciples in that Case would probably have been very nice and circumstantial in describing and transmitting it to us ; every Rule, every Precept must have been expounded in Accommodation to that Plan, and all false Deductions and wrong Applications would have been cautiously guarded against, and effectually pre-

vented: But his Design was another, and of quite different Kind; he neither came to erect new Forms of Government, nor to alter old ones: These he took all as he found them; and in this respect, had no more in View, than to teach Men how to be easy and happy in the Condition they were in: Hence it is, that in this Particular he went no farther than to enjoin Submission and Obedience to Government in general, without any of those Distinctions and Refinements which the various Policies of the World had made necessary before, and in numberless Cases have since. What then had *St Paul* to do more, than to go on upon the same Plan, and by the Example of his Master to admonish, exhort, and persuade his Disciples to observe and to practise this general Law? Does it any where appear that he has done more? when it was suspected, was not the Apostle's own Conduct a Key to an authentic Exposition of his Doctrine, to remove that Suspicion? In two Instances it may be seen, with what Spirit he pleaded, and insisted upon the Privileges of a *Roman* Citizen at one time, when illegally imprisoned; at another when threatned to be scourged? Could, or would a Man who taught, that a blind and slavish Submission was right or wrong due to every Ordinance of Man, act or remonstrate in this manner? In the very Place where he teaches, and presses the Duty of Subjects, does he not instruct Magistrates also in theirs, and deduce and exhibit the true Grounds of their Authority, and of their Right to exact that Obedience? farther than this he could not go, more than this he could not, nor ought not to have done.* Had he, or had his Master, given out
their

* In this restrained Sense he is expounded by some of the earliest Fathers, by *Jerom*, *Theodore*t, *Theophylact*, *Chrysostom*,

their Instructions with more Particularity or Precision, Christianity had probably been worse received than it even was at first setting out ; it must have retarded, if not effectually marr'd its Progress ; Had he taken upon him to define, or to mark out the exact Limits between the Prerogatives of Princes, and the Rights of the People, to explain political Niceties, by distinguishing between a King *de facto*, and a King *de jure* : between the Rights of Princes founded upon Compact, and Consent of the People, or derived from hereditary, indefeasible Succession, and such like Questions peculiar and relative to particular Climates and Countries, he would, he ought to have been treated as a seditious Innovator, and Controversies upon this Subject, instead of being prevented, had been endlessly multiplied.

Here, my Lord, I ought to stop, for it is wonderful, it is shameful, that in so plain a Case, any Defence of him should be necessary ; that it should be necessary at this Day to defend a Doctrine without which Government cannot exist, that arises unavoidably from the very Nature of Government, which had been taught by every Legislator, and Philosopher since the first Institution of Government, and which is liable to no Objections but from the Abuses of it by Tyrants, by Hypocrites, and by Fanaticks.

In sum, the general Idea of Liberty, so strongly displayed, and asserted in the Gospel, might as well be argued against, and exploded, on account

Chrysostom and Origen, as quoted by Dr. Whitby, Verba hæc (viz. Rom. 13. 1.) non de persona ipsa regente, sed de regiminis officio, nec deinq; de injuste sed juste regentibus.

Strict. Patr. in Rom.

of the many extravagant and wicked Purposes to which it had been prostituted by that hideous Spawn of Vermin, that broke in upon our Constitution, and made such wild Havock by their frantic Pranks, both in Religion and Government, from 1641 to 1648, as *St. Paul* can be reasonably arraigned or condemned for the Absurdities, which his general Doctrine of Obedience, has been applied to defend in Accommodation to particular Systems.

In the Choice of this Instance mere unmixed Malice only could have directed and led the Author, and where Malice is the Principle, Judgment rarely operates much in the Effect. Ignorance could have no Share in it, for no Man was more perfectly Master of the Subject, or knew better the whole State of this Controversy; for what Purposes it had at first been taken up, by what Spirit it had been so long maintained, in what Manner it had been throughout managed and conducted: In short, he knew that the Controversy with all that Heat and Virulence with which the Doctrine was abetted on one side, and exploded on the other, arose only from a Peculiarity in the Constitution of these Kingdoms, which was not a Point either to be foreseen or provided for by *Saint Paul*.

Does not then, my Lord, this single Instance, justify the general Censure we have passed on this Author? Can it be said, that the Resentment I have expressed is either misplaced, or disproportioned? in what could any Man more injuriously, or more unbecomingly, abuse the Rights of Society, the Privileges of Reason, or the Advantages of Learning, than the Author has done, by the
Pains

Pains he has taken to poyson the Minds, and to corrupt the Morals of his Countrymen ?

Οταν γαρ ηδυσ τοῖς λογοῖς, φρονῶν κακως
Πείθῃ το πλεθος, τη πολει κακον μέγα.

It is the Sentence of *Euripides* : * That his Sentence is just, we have unhappily too many Examples to prove, and have sometimes very unhappily felt their Influence : More might be said, perhaps not unusefully, but I forbear to enlarge, as I foresee, that I shall want all the Indulgence in a succeeding Occasion, that your Grace can be supposed to allow me.

* In *Orestes*.



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LETTER IV.

MY last Letter to your Grace concluded with observing, that mere Malice only could have suggested the Objection, which was the Subject of it : But in the one we are next to consider, Ignorance as well as Malice seems to have had its Share : In this, notwithstanding the decretory Air and Manner in which the Author passes Sentence, I take upon me to say, that he was entirely ignorant of the Apostle's Doctrine, and knew nothing of it, or about it : If he ever read the Epistles of *St. Paul*, (as we have Reason to doubt) it was only with the Intent of finding occasion to cavil.

Where the Professions of Men put them under no immediate Obligation of inquiring into difficult and disputable Points of Doctrine, Ignorance in matters not essential to the Faith, or Practice of a Christian, is no Fault, not always, perhaps never a Misfortune : What a Man is not particularly called to, nor any way interested in, he is excusable for not attending to : Such a Person has nothing but Curiosity to invite or to draw him to it ; what perhaps it would be better if he sometimes wanted, because by that Curiosity Men are often led into Mistakes, that, if they do no other Mischief, have this common Effect, that they make
them

them troublesome to others, and ridiculous in themselves.

Where Men set up for Teachers and Reformers, to explode old Systems, to correct old Opinions, and to substitute new ones of their own, the Case however is quite different ; in this Ignorance is utterly inexcusable, and all the Chance the pretended Reformer, or mock Philosopher has against being both ridiculous, and contemptible, is, that many of his Readers may be as ignorant as himself, and many more as willing to be perverted, as he was to deceive ; where such fall in the way of our Author, he may maintain some Reputation, perhaps carry off a few desultory Souls, but I do not apprehend, that any but such will believe upon the Credit of his Affirmation, either that the Doctrine of absolute Predestination was Saint *Paul's* Doctrine, or that any Doctrine of St. *Paul's* is intelligibly prophane, or repugnant to our Ideas of God's moral Perfections.

To proceed regularly in Vindication of our Apostle, it will be necessary before I go farther, to state the general and too common Doctrine of Predestination in that Sense, in which, I doubt, we are obliged to admit that it is prophane.

(1) It supposes, that Men are naturally all corrupt from the very Womb, under the Wrath and Curse of God, *i. e.* in a State of Damnation, till such time as they come under the Influences of efficacious and irresistible Grace.

(2) It supposes, that this Grace acts arbitrarily and unaccountably without any Concurrence of the Subject it works upon, and without respect to any Qualifications

Qualifications in the Subject, either to entitle it to its Reception, or to fit it for its Operations.

(3) It supposes that only a small Number among Christians, are arbitrarily called, elected, adopted, regenerated, sanctified and saved; and that all the rest are by a sovereign, absolute, eternal, and irreversible Decree, passed by, reprobated and condemned.

Now, my Lord, whoever was the Author and Contriver of this System, out of whosever's Brains, the Materials were originally spun, whoever collected or put them together, your Grace knows, and I may say, they are none of *St. Paul's*, he was neither the Father nor the Founder, the Author nor Inventor of it. It is so far from being his Sense, that nothing can be more abhorrent to his Meaning, more alien and opposite to all the Ends proposed by him, both in teaching and in writing.

It is a Privilege, a Privilege to which every Writer hath an indisputable Claim, to have his Words so expounded, that he shall always be consistent, and never contradict himself.* The Imperfection of Reason, the Scantiness of Knowledge, the Inaccuracy of Language, may, one or all, insensibly sometimes lead a Writer into seeming, perhaps real Inconsistencies, even when under the Direction of a general good Intention, especially when treating of the deep, and hidden Things of God, when unfolding the Scheme of Divine Providence, and explaining the Dispensations of

* Εἰ δοῖται περὶ τῶν Αποστόλων νοεῖν ὡς μάχομεθα εαυτοὺς λεγόντες.
Quæremus, audiat ne cogitare, Apostolus pugnancia loqui, says Origen, in his 2d Book, De Principiis:

Wisdom and Mercy. But where an infallible Spirit is supposed to go along, to direct the Pen or the Thoughts of a Writer, the Rule is indispensable, because the Thing is impossible: If a Suspicion arises that he was not inspired, the Case would not be altered; for the Plea of Inspiration, the very Pretence to it, would be an Argument for our stricter Attention, not only to detect the Imposture, but to develope likewise the true Sense and Meaning of the Writer.

A Neglect of Order and Perspicuity, I admit cannot be Apostolical; for the very Reason assigned, "the Design of a Writer in these supposed Circumstances, must be to instruct, and to convince." * The Poet quoted in the Close of my last Letter says the same, σοφοι τι τὸ σαφές, οὐ τὸ μὴ σαφές. But it does not for all that prove that Order or Perspicuity is wanting; because they do not strike every Reader at first View, before he has made a proper and accurate Examination. The Defect may be, perhaps, oftner in the Reader, than in the Writer, in the Narrowness of his Understanding, and the Slowness of his Comprehension: There may be Inaptitude of fundry Kinds, and from various Causes; he may have casually adopted Notions, opposite to what he conceives, was the Writer's Design, he may have a previous wrong Information, or a general Disposition to take for granted whatever may disparage, or help to lessen the Authority of the Writer, nay, there may be a latent Wish and Desire to find true, whatever may have been imputed of this Kind.

The Difficulty, especially of understanding an old Author, may arise from other Causes, from

* V. 4. p. 330.

Causes for which the Author is no way responsible ; and which can lay no Imputation either against his Candour, Capacity, Knowledge, or Ingenuity. It may arise from the Phraseology, from a use of Terms obsolete and long since out of Use, Terms that were at first peculiar and relative to the People, or to the Circumstances of the People to whom they were immediately, and intentionally directed and appropriated, and with a View perhaps to their sole Benefit, and Advantage : The Instruction conveyed, was perhaps intended to go no farther, and the Reasons for studying the Whole, or any Part of a Writer's Works, ceasing for a Time, the Study might well be discontinued : A general Inattention to particular Subjects and Arguments handled by him, though of high and strict Importance at first, might easily and not unreasonably succeed ; by these means after a long Succession of Time, when the same Subjects of Controversy came to be revived, and to be reassumed, his Writings would doubtlessly appear obscure, the Sense intricate and involved, the Interpretation doubtful and uncertain.

Upon this Head your Grace will allow me to explain my Meaning, more fully : After the intire Abolition of the *Jewish* State, which happened not till the reign of the Emperor *Adrian*, the Ritual or Ceremonial Law, which was incorporated, and a Part of their Civil Polity, of Course dropp'd and was discontinued ; because after that it was quite useless.

In Consequence of this the Controversies between unbelieving, and believing *Jews*, and between both and Christian *Gentiles*, which had for a Time subsisted, and were so warmly litigated, and about which the greatest Part of *St. Paul's*

Epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians* is taken up, would cease also, and be soon forgotten : The Subject of Strife and Emulation was by that removed, and Contention will always cease, when the Occasion drops, or is taken away.

Hence it might very well happen, that those Parts of St. *Paul's* Epistles which related immediately to those Controversies, as a great Part of them confessedly do, would in a little Time be less attended to, and though they continued to be read in the Churches, on account of the pious and edifying Sentiments in the persuasive and exhortative Parts, would be less studied in private : Thus it might happen that the Phraseology of those Epistles would be no longer the received or common Phraseology ; the precise determinate Ideas marked out by each Word, would hardly be retained, or understood ; new ones would be substituted, and of Course the Difficulty of recovering the old ones, if after Occasions called for them, would grow daily greater and stronger.

Besides, at any succeeding Period, when the Subject and Sense of these Writings might come to be enquired into, the Occasion might neither be exactly the same, nor so similar, as to make it necessary to search for the original Idea, that each Term was intended to convey ; and yet this might be perfectly necessary to a full understanding of them. Succeeding Writers might have a different Design, they might be in search of Materials to compose, and work up a System of their own, and upon that account might not use the proper Means to discover the real Sense and Meaning of the Apostle, so much as to twist, and to accommodate his Words to their own System, they would endeavour to find their own Meaning in them, and to serve
their

their Purpose by fastening it upon him, and bringing him to speak for it.

From this View the Difficulty of accounting why even to *Origen*, the Writings of St. *Paul* might appear in the Light, in which he has stated and represented them will not be great,* much less in accounting why *Austin* so long after, when Christianity had undergone so many and so great Alterations; when hardly any Remembrance was preserved of the original End, Use and Design of these Epistles, and a Design was formed, and pretty publicly abetted, inconsistent with the Original Scheme of Christianity, subversive of the common Rights of Christians, and which particularly contradicted the general Tenor of this Apostle's Doctrine; when the Scriptures were universally neglected, in a manner thrown quite aside, insomuch that the Generality had almost forgot, that they had any such Rule, and Tradition and Church Authority were set up in their Place; there will be no Difficulty in accounting, why this renown'd and much celebrated Bishop of *Hippo* should be able to invent, forge, and dress up a Scheme so repugnant and contradictory to the true Sense and Design of this Apostle, and yet be able to pass it upon the World for the Apostle's own.

His Reputation was such that the Doctors of the Age would mostly go along with him, and the rest would take it for granted. *Pelagius* issuing from an obscure Corner of the World, in a private Capacity, would be too weak to controul him; the poor travelling Monk if he had the Luck to be acquitted of Heresy in a Synod consisting only of about

* Philocalia Cap. ix. Ed. Camb. 1658.

a Score of Bishops at one time, was sure to be condemned by hundreds assembled at another, at the Instance and by the Interest of his Opponent *Austin*, whose great Name awed even some of the Popes, and brought them from being Favourers of *Pelagius*, to give him up and condemn him.

In the Circumstances the World had then got into, the Thing was not hard ; the People were little accustomed to read, or look into the holy Scriptures ; in Disputes the Appeal was not to them, but from them ; and about this time, the Study of them was both discountenanced and discouraged ; where they were consulted occasionally, it was only to see, whether Passages quoted and referred to, were indeed there ; if they found they were, the Inquiry went no farther, they were satisfied, the Point was decided, and the Opinion established.

Hence it happened, nor do I see, my Lord, how it could happen otherwise, that detached Sentences in this Apostle, and other Parts of the Scriptures, as well as of his Writings, would be considered, not as Parts of a Whole, in Conformity to which they were to be expounded, but as distinct, independent Theorems or Propositions, like Sentences in the Books of *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiasticus*, the Maxims of *Rochejacault*, or the like : The Notion of a regular, uniform, well digested Plan, running thro' the whole, with a methodical Coherence and consistency of every Part, each ministerial and subservient to the original Design, was either forgotten or not much attended to ; and in this manner of treating Authors, so requisite, so necessary in working up of new Systems, it is not to be wondered at, that the true Sense should be departed from, and in time quite lost.

The

The very Manner, my Lord, and Method of Preaching, taken up afterwards, so different from the first Apostolic Method, might, and I believe did, greatly contribute to the Misunderstanding the Sense of the Scriptures then, and our greater Difficulty of understanding them now. I mean, my Lord, the Custom of chusing single Sentences for Texts, enlarging upon them, and deducing Doctrines, Propositions, and Corrolaries from them, as we see from the numerous Homilies of the Fathers was the prevailing Mode in all the Churches.

Nay, the very manner of dividing the Books of the New Testament into Chapters and Verses, might in great measure contribute to it, and was perhaps the original Cause of that Perplexity, want of Order and Perspicuity so observable in some Parts of them now ; but more unjustly charged than observable still. If instead of this, Pains had been taken, to have marked separately the different Heads of the Apostle's Discourse, the Topics he treated of, the Subject of his Argument, to whom he addressed himself in one Place, and to whom in another, the Transition from one Subject to another, where his Discourse began and ended, where it was controversial and argumentative, and where exhortative and persuasive, most or all of the Difficulty complained of now, had been, I am willing to presume, intirely avoided.

However this might be, the foregoing Considerations will likewise account to us, why even *Calvin*, and some others, might have adopted, grafted upon, and improved with Care and Art, the Mistakes of *Austin*. *Calvin*, my Lord, was in some Things a great and respectable Author ; the Event has proved that he was fitter to form a Common-

wealth than a Church. The History of *Geneva* by *Spon*, shews that he was in one an Adept, in the other a Bungler : His general Design seems not to have been so much to restore primitive Christianity, as to gather out of the corrupted parts of it, a Peculium of his own, and to establish a Society distinct and separate from the rest : And to this purpose the Notion of Original Sin as explained by *Austin*, of Election and Justification by Faith without Works, in short of Predestination in general (the Consequences of which he was also studious to evade, tho' weakly and inconsistently) might readily serve, and be easily accommodated. Tho' he wrote Commentaries upon the Scriptures, and in some things has succeeded tolerably, he seems either to have wanted Abilities or Means of Information, or Uprightness of Intention, competent to the Undertaking ; he derived his Helps from impure, muddy and vitiated Streams, and the greatest Proof we have of his Wisdom, the only Proof we have of his Modesty is, that he meddled not with the *Revelations* : After all the Wonder is, that after explaining the Text of *St. Paul* in the same way that the Remonstrants have since, he should make his Commentary, and Institute, (as I think they do) contradict one another.*

And thus we may at last, without Mistake, Misrepresentation, I presume, or Injury, account why our Author finding this Doctrine of Predestination so prophane in the Sense already stated, to be at one Time the Doctrine of almost the whole Church, at another of a particular, and very considerable Part of it, under the Authority of *Calvin*, and another Part of it for prudential Reasons, seemingly suffragating, or at best openly not oppo-

* See p. 74.

ſing a System too ſtrongly abetted, and by too great Numbers at the Time, to make an avowed Oppoſition adviſable or ſafe, without the Hazard of driving back Proſelytes into the dangerous Errors from which they had been ſo lately emancipated: Why our Author, I ſay, upon this View of the Caſe, might without examining take it for granted, that this ſame Doctrine of abſolute Predeſtination, was in Truth the Doctrine of *St Paul*, and with a new System in his own Head, with a formed Intention to pluck up, and to extirpate Chriſtianity, might plume himſelf in the Diſcovery, and with Joy and Pleaſure ſeize the Opportunity of giving the Objection, all the Force, Strength or Plauſibility, that it could receive from his Vivacity, Parts, and Penetration.

Upon the whole, whatſoever, my Lord, were the original and real Cauſes of the Obſcurity, and of the Difficulty of expounding *St. Paul's* Epistles, whether I am right or wrong in my Conjectures, or Computation, ſtill the Difficulty is not ſo great as is pretended: The Labyrinth is not ſo intricate, the Mazes not ſo puzzling, but that we may yet get out of them: A Clue we have ſtill to lead us, Light enough, if we do not wilfully ſhut it out, to diſcover the Order, Perſpicuity, Coherence, Connection, and Senſe of his Diſcourſes, and to confute, tho' perhaps never to ſilence, the Cavils and Objections of Infidels.

Let us try then, if under the Diſadvantage of much inferior Parts, but with the Help of an honeſt and upright Intention, we can penetrate into the general Scheme, and Deſign of this Epistle to the *Romans*, and by that into the true Interpretation of the Apoſtle's Senſe and Doctrine in the controverted Paſſages.

The first Part of this Epistle exhibits to the Reader a general View of the Goodness and Mercy of God in the Redemption of Mankind ; it represents *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as equally obnoxious to Wrath, and subject to Punishment, from whence he proves, that if the *Jews* were to be retained in the Church, to be continued in Covenant with God, and to be Members of his Kingdom, it must be by Grace through Faith, and that if the *Gentiles* were to be admitted, it must be by the same Method, and upon the same Conditions.

After proving that both were interested in the Privileges of the Gospel, which were the free Gifts of God's Favour, and Love for Mankind, he goes on to declare to Believers in general, the Obligations they lie under from the Nature of those Benefits, and the Manner of bestowing those Favours, to a Life of sincere Holiness and strict Virtue, at the same time he warns them of the Afflictions and Sufferings, that this would probaly, nay necessarily bring upon them ; yet that still the only full, sure, and satisfying Proof, of their Election and Adoption, would be their steady Perseverance in a Life of Faith and Holiness in spite of Dangers and Temptations.

This done he reassumes the Controversy with the unbelieving *Jews* ; he endeavours to give them right Sentiments, of the Title and Privileges which they claimed in consequence of *Abraham's* Faith and Obedience ; he vindicates the Equity, Wisdom, and Goodness of this whole Dispensation, and proves to them particularly, that it was just and fit to reject and exclude such of them as refused to come in from this general Indemnity and Act of Grace ; after which he proceeds in the 12th Chapter

Chapter to a Summary of Christian Duty, exhorts warmly to the practice of it, and concludes with Salutations to Persons of Note and Distinction.

From this short View of the general Contents of this Epistle, it is evident, first, that there can be no just Cause or Ground to complain of the want of Order, greater Uniformity of Design and Regularity of Execution is rarely to be met; and as Order, in most Cases, implies and infers Perspicuity; the Fault (am I rash, my Lord, in saying so) would seem rather to be in the Heart or Understanding of the Reader, in Stupidity or Negligence, than in the unintelligibility of our Apostle's Discourse.

The Author is pleased to observe, *that the Disputes about Grace, Predestination, Free-will, Election, Reprobation, &c. which St. Paul pretended to teach, it were to be wished that no Man after him had presumed to teach; since they appeared obscure, even to St. Peter.* I wish so too; but does it follow, which is the Thing he would insinuate, that *St. Paul* is to be taxed as the Author of these Disputes? His Words, I grant, have been since tortured and strained to support them; but, in his Days, there is no Evidence that any such Disputes had at all subsisted, or were thought of. On the contrary, they arose not till many Years after *St. Paul* was in his Grave; and owed their Rise first to a weak Method assumed by some of the Christian Fathers to confute the *Manichean* Heresy.

Whether *Austin* was the first that took it up, I pretend not to say; though *Dr. Whitby*, I find, is positive that he was, and that the Fathers before him, were universally of a different Opinion; nay, my Lord, he goes farther, and asserts roundly, that

that many of them, even after *Austin*, held the contrary Doctrine*, and for this, I confess, there seems to be some Ground; because *Vossius*, in his History of *Pelagianism*, cites three several Councils, in which *Austin's* Doctrine was condemned: but however this be, one Thing is justly observable, that this Doctrine had probably never have grown into Fashion, nor been wrought into System, had it not been thought necessary to rid them of the *Manichæan* Doctrine of two co-existent and co-eternal Principles; for in this Way only, it seems, they imagined the Introduction of moral Evil, the Evil of Concupiscence could be accounted for, and all Things reduced to one Principle.

Accordingly, my Lord, we find that the Orthodox at that Time all charged *Pelagius* with holding the impious Tenets of the *Manichees*†; and the Reason of their Censure was this, because they, the *Pelagians*, he says, held that Concupiscence was derived to Men, not from the Sin of *Adam*, “per prevaricationem primi hominis in naturam nostram;” but by the Intercourse of a co-eternal evil Principle, “per alienæ Deo eternæ malæque Naturæ commixtionem nobis accidisse. In short, when we consider that *Austin* himself had been in his Youth poisoned with this same Heresy of the *Manichees*, and that it was by the Labours of *Ambrose* that he was first reclaimed‡, and consider, as our Author justly enough observes, “How natu-

* See his Strict. Patr. in Psalm li. and in Ep. ad Rom. where the Passages are all produced.

† Lib. de Gestis Pelag. Austin's Works, Benedict. Ed. Sed & dogmata tenebant impiorum Manichæorum, & Lib. 5. cont. Pelag. aut Manichæus est Pelagius aut Manichæis suffragatur incautus.

‡ See Dupin, and the Life of *Austin* by *Possidius*, in his own Works.

“ rally Men run from one Extreme to another ;
 “ and that Reformation is often nothing more than
 “ a Change of Errors,” we cannot be long, or
 much at a Loss, to account for *Austin*’s Conduct in
 this Matter, nor for the Rise and Progress of this
 mysterious and intricate System * ; but we are, and
 always will be, at a Loss to account, why a Person,
 who knew all this, or who easily might have known
 it, for what Reasons it was first forged and invent-
 ed, by what Means and Methods it at last grew
 into System, and by what Authority it was propa-
 gated and handed down : o us, should maliciously
 endeavour, or weakly hope, to father it upon St.
Paul, in whose Writings there are no Traces of
 any such System, no Evidence of any such Doctrine.

It is a ticklish Point that I am upon ; there are
 Rocks and Sands of both Hands of me, upon nei-
 ther of which I would willingly split. Your Grace,
 therefore, will be so good as to observe, that when
 I say this, I mean only the Doctrine of Predestina-
 tion, as already stated in that Sense, in which it is
 strictly and properly prophane : *For that there is a
 godly Consideration of Predestination and Election in
 Christ, full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable Com-
 fort to godly Persons*, I readily admit : Nor indeed,
 my Lord, do I think, that even *Austin*, though he
 laid the Foundation (though, as *Dupin* says of him,
 he started several Questions never thought of be-
 fore, and resolved many of them by the mere

* What puts it out of doubt is, that when the *Pelagians*
 had objected to *Austin*, that the Fathers were generally
 against him. *Austin* confesses the Thing, but evades the
 Objection, by saying, that before *Pelagius* had broached
 his Doctrine, the Fathers had no occasion to inquire into
 or consider the Question. *Aug. Lib. de Prædest. cap. 14.*
 and this Answer of *Austin*’s confirms what I have alledged,
 p. 65, 66.

Strength of his Wit, without recourse to Scripture; and, for this Reason, may be properly enough called, *the Father of this artificial Theology*) meant so much, or carried it so far, as Moderns have since; though they only pretended to copy him, in that Part of his Writings, which I have consulted; though he plunges deep into Mystery, too deep to recover himself, or get out, yet he is sometimes very dexterous in evading the prophane Consequences of his own Doctrine; whence, perhaps, it is that, among Moderns, the Controversy has often been more about *Austin's* Sense than about *St. Paul's*. It was undoubtedly therefore to his Successors, the modern *Augustinians*, the *Calvinists*, *Jansenists*, and Messrs of *Port Royal* particularly, that the Author should have paid his Compliments, for the Opportunity and Pleasure they have given him of displaying his amazing Scepticism, and that extravagant Taint of Spleen and Ill-humour that runs through all his Works: To *St. Paul* he had no Obligations; in his Days there were no such Disputes; the Controversy then subsisting was only between *Jews* and *Gentiles*, about their respective Titles and Interests to, and in the Privileges and Blessings of, the Gospel.

Before I proceed, there is a farther Point to be considered; for the Author, my Lord, says, "That these Things appeared obscure, even to *St. Peter*;" but this is not true; for these sublime theological Doctrines, as he calls them, were not the Doctrines of *St. Paul*, so could not be the Things that were obscure to *St. Peter*: Besides, *St. Peter* does not say, that the Things in *St. Paul* were obscure, but that some Things in him were hard to be understood, which may be the Case often of what is not obscure; a Thing may be very

very clearly expressed, and yet very hard to understand: The Things, which St. *Peter* says were hard to be understood, were quite different Things; the Things of which he had just before been speaking himself, viz. *the Promises of Christ's coming, and the long-suffering of God for our Salvation*, as may be seen by comparing what is there said, with what his beloved Brother *Paul* had delivered upon the same Subject; *Rom. viii. 19. 1 Cor. xv. 24. and 1 Thess. iv. 15.*

The very Expression *ἐν πάσαις ἐπιστολαῖς*, obliges us to look for them elsewhere; because this Doctrine of Predestination is not treated of in all his Epistles, consequently are not the Things referred to by St. *Peter*. And in what does St. *Peter* say the Difficulty of understanding them consisted? Not from any Obscurity in his manner of treating them, as the Author would insinuate, but from the Ignorance or Instability of his Readers, who, by these Means, wrested them as they did other Scriptures besides these, to their own Destruction; against which, the Disciples he was writing to, would, in his Opinion, be sufficiently secured, by improving themselves in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ *. Is it not amazing, my Lord, that such Things should be the Subjects of Disputes, or brought into Controversy?

In compliance, my Lord, with the Admirers of this celebrated Infidel, let me suppose (the Supposi-

* I have here quoted this 2d Ep. usually called *Peter's*, as his; because it was received in the Church by the Council of *Laodiceæ*, when the Canon was settled; about which, however, great Doubts did then subsist, perhaps not sufficiently cleared up since: The Matter is of no Importance to the present Controversy; such as desire to look into it, may compare Dr. *Cosin*, with *Grotius*, and *Dupin*.

tion will not offend any sober, honest-minded Believer) that St. *Paul* might have had an Eye, and have glanced, not indirectly, at some of those Niceties and Refinements controverted in the Schools before, and about his time, *and*, which he says, *obtained universally under the respectable Name of Theology and Metaphysics*. Is this a Reason for any Man to charge him, either with Blasphemy or Prophaneness? Let his manner of treating these Subjects be examined, and even upon this Supposition, he will be acquitted.

In the Places where he is supposed to do this, does he invent or add any Thing new to the Faith or Practice of Christians, besides what he had learned and been taught by Christ? Does he put the Salvation or Happiness of Mankind upon the Truth or Falshood of the Doctrine? Is the Solution given by him of such Intricacies repugnant to any clear Idea of God's moral Perfections? Is the Free-agency, the natural Liberty of Man, impaired or destroyed by it? Is the Guilt of Immorality lessened, or transferred, or Man made less accountable? If nothing of this kind can be said; if the contrary, in every Instance, as I am sure it is, is evidently true; if where he can be supposed to have an Eye to them at all, he treats them, at all times, with the greatest Caution and Wariness, in a Way intended, and that ought effectually to bring down, the Pride of human Nature, to discourage that Arrogance and Presumption, which carries human Reason (and his own remarkably) so often beyond the narrow Limits of its Comprehension; if this, I say, be the Case (and the Passages, whence it may be proved, are so many, that every Reader can with ease refer to them) the Charge of Prophaneness must recoil, and falls not upon the Apostle, but upon this presumptuous Objector.

If in considering the Prescience of God, and the Free-agency of Man, Difficulties have arisen, which Reason may perhaps never be able to clear up, how is St. *Paul* answerable for this? The Author, who has sounded his own Abilities very high, has but slightly attempted it, and not at all succeeded; if Men's final Happiness or Salvation depended upon the Solution of such Difficulties, St. *Paul*, we have reason to believe, would have undertaken it, and, had he undertaken it, we may not doubt, would have done it: But such Topics of Argumentation had no Connection with the Design of his Epistle, nor with the End of his Preaching: On the contrary, he every where industriously avoids to puzzle his Readers with such Intricacies, and upon many Occasions, lays himself out to discourage all such Inquiries: His general Sentence is, that in many Things *there is a Knowledge too excellent for us*, a Knowledge that we cannot attain; in such, he justly cries out, *O Altitudo!* and his Meaning is plainly, that in all such Points, it becomes human Weakness and Ignorance to submit: To conclude that God's Attributes are not at Variance, because we cannot explain all the Methods of his Providence. If this be *Theological Effronterie*, as he calls it, * *in the Divine*, it is, we will, we may say, more arrogant and impudent in the Philosopher, who pretends to be a Theist.

To return to my Subject; if this may be thought a Digression, your Grace sees what the Apostle's Plan and principal Design in this Epistle was; and we may now with Reason argue, with Certainty conclude, that the Doctrine of absolute Predestination, as stated above, and charged to him by the

* Frag. & Min. V. 5. p. 366.

Objection, cannot be his; and that it was impossible for the Wit of Man to contrive, or to sketch out, any thing more directly repugnant to that Plan, and to every End that he could possibly propose to serve by it.

For let us consider, my Lord, what would have been the probable Consequence of this Doctrine at that time: instead of persuading the unbelieving *Jews* to enter into the Fold of Christ, it would have frightened them away; instead of bringing them to comply with the Call and Tender of Salvation made to them, it would have raised their Aversion, and tempted them to seal their Reprobation by their Obstinacy. As it was, not many came in, comparatively few were chosen: In this way they had still been fewer, where-ever that Doctrine was preached, perhaps none at all. Instead of encouraging *Gentiles*, who were already Believers, to persevere, to be steadfast, to grow in Grace, to add to their Faith, Virtue, and to their Virtue, Patience, &c. by assuring them of their Title and Interest in the present Blessings and Privileges of the Gospel, it must have raised infinite Doubts and Scruples in their Minds, made them wavering and inconstant, and ready to turn back and desert upon the least Appearance of Difficulty or of Danger. In such case, Numbers certainly would have fallen off; none probably would have consented to have forsaken Houses and Lands, &c. if they could have no better Certainty of the grand Object of their Hopes, than what this rigid, severe, and gloomy Doctrine presented.

What Sort of an Argument would it have been, either to *Jew* or *Gentile*, to have told them, that neither the Promises of God, nor the Declarations of his Will; neither their own Reflections, upon their

their Qualifications and Conditions, nor their Reasonings upon the Nature and Perfections of the Deity, could give them the least Certainty whether they were of the Number of those whom God, by a secret irreversible Decree, had sentenced to eternal Happiness, or to everlasting endless Misery? What kind of a Persuasive would this have been to Holiness; to push at higher and nobler Measures of Perfection, to strive, to contend, to wrestle, to run for the high Prize of their Calling? How unlikely to be an availing Motive to Prayer, to Watchfulness, to deny themselves, to resist Temptations, to endure Afflictions? What Folly had it been in him to endeavour to persuade them to this; what greater Folly in them to be persuaded, if, after all, they might still be of the Number of those who go to Perdition? Though they obeyed the gracious Summons, though they came at the first Invitation, though they had their Lamps trimmed, every preparatory Qualification to be received, to enter into Joy, might yet be passed over, shut out, reprobated, condemned; because they were not foreseen, because they were not foreknown, though they were such as God must foreknow would be worthy, were yet not predestinated: Though they were elected, regenerated, sanctified, yet could not be adopted, justified, glorified?

The Doctrine, my Lord, not only makes the Apostle contradict himself, which no true Exposition can do, but it breaks the very thread of his Discourse. It not only makes a confused Jumble of the whole Gospel, but makes Nonsense of the very Argument he is supposed to maintain by it; and demolishes the very Fabric that it supposes him at the Time to be building.

Whatever is the Sense of the Passage in question, a Chain indubitably there is, every Link of which hangs one by another; a Coherence and Connection there is of every Sentence and Part, from the first to the last.

Whoever were the *fore-known*,

The same were the *pre-destinated*.

Whoever were the *pre-destinated*,

The same were the *called*.

Whoever were the *called*,
The same were the *justified*.

Whoever were the *justified*,

The same were the *glorified*.

All this is evident and undeniable; and yet if the Doctrine charged to him, be the Doctrine he meant to teach, these Things do neither consist nor follow, the Persons who were foreknown and called, may neither be predestinated, justified, nor glorified.

Thus, my Lord, the Objection and the Doctrine are both, I conceive, unanswerably confuted, from the very Words upon which they are founded.

Whatever Imputations the Enemies of Religion may endeavour to fasten upon St. *Paul*, to lessen his Reputation, to derogate from an Authority that stands so much in their Way, and has something to answer to every Pretence which they assume or advance; he was not so weak and superficial a Reasoner, as the Objection supposes; he had clear
Ideas,

Ideas, and had he been disposed to work up an artificial Theology, as is put to his Account, it would not, we presume, have been so disjointed, so incoherent, that every Bungler that came after him must necessarily have seen it's Flaws, and put to his Hand to patch and to mend it, by adding their own ill-sorted and worse-tempered Materials: He would, we may say, at least, have made it consistent and hang aptly together; if, when brought to the Test, and tried by the Standard of severe Criticism, it appeared neither rational nor sound, it would yet have been palatable and agreeable.

But if the Doctrine imputed be not *St. Paul's* Doctrine, it may be asked, what is his Doctrine? To this, my Lord, I shall answer presently; and, by a proper Paraphrase, assign, what I apprehend will be a rational and consistent Explication; allow me previously to make a Remark upon somewhat that our Author has advanced in another Place.

“ He is certain, he says, * That Christ did not
 “ teach this Doctrine, but that *Austin* did; and
 “ whether *St. Paul* intended to teach it, is to some
 “ Persons made doubtful, but not to him: Our
 “ Countryman *Pelagius* in the 5th Century set
 “ himself against it; but he, it seems, ascribed
 “ too much to Free-will, and too little to Grace:
 “ But the *Semi-pelagians* avoided that Extreme, and
 “ their Doctrine appears moderate and reasonable,
 “ and no way repugnant to the Ideas of divine
 “ Justice and Goodness. Mr. *Locke* reconciled
 “ his (the Apostle's) Doctrine a little to common
 “ Sense, by supposing, that the Apostle had no
 “ Intention to speak about personal Rejection or
 “ Election: But *St. Austin* thought fit to under-
 “ stand him otherwise, and to believe the Apostle

* *Ess.* 4. p. 510.

“ according to his own Interpretation, in defiance
 “ of common Sense and common Equity.”

By this Account then, *Austin*, it seems, understood *St. Paul* better than either *Pelagius* or *Locke*, the *Semi-pelagians*, *Arminians*, or Remonstrants afterwards: I do not take upon me to vindicate one or the other, farther than may be necessary to a Vindication of *St. Paul*. Their Systems are none of them compleat, or free from Errors; the Thing that strikes my Thoughts here, is, the extreme Fondness the Author every where shews to arraign *St. Paul*, and to load him with Imputations which he imagines may serve to blast his Credit and destroy his Authority: For why should *Austin*, my Lord, in this Author's Sense so often repeated one of the greatest Corruptors of Christianity, be more certainly right in his Explication of *St. Paul* than *Pelagius* or Mr. *Locke*, and so many others, who have taken the same Side? No other probable Reason can be assigned, but that if *St. Paul* was acquitted, Christianity would stand impregably; and if *St. Paul* was condemned, neither the Authority of *Pelagius*, or *Locke*, or any of that Stamp, would avail against his: And if it is certain that Christ did not teach this Doctrine of absolute Predestination (a Certainty that I wonder how he came by, for, according to *Austin*, Christ taught it, as well as *Paul*) why was he so inveterately prejudiced against *St. Paul*, as to conclude he did? The Presumption, at first View, was certainly in his Favour; that whatever Christ taught, *Paul* taught the same, because he had his, which the Author calls, *Paul's Gospel*, by immediate Revelation from Christ. That it was the same, we have no reason to doubt; many Considerations to induce us to believe, this particularly (to mention no more now)

that

that Christ's Doctrine, when *Paul* taught, was too recent in the Memory of his Disciples, and too well understood, for him, or any other, to venture to contradict it openly.

The only perceivable Difference between them seems to be, that what Christ revealed only in general, as an Event that would happen, *Paul*, by his Situation and Controversies with the *Jews*, was obliged to explain, and to assign the Reasons of to justify the Event. The Obstinacy of the *Jews* on one hand, and the Scruples of the *Gentiles* on the other, extorted it from him; and if these Causes had not combined to make it necessary for the Conviction of one, and the Comfort of the other, it is more than probable that St. *Paul* had passed it over, and suffered the Prediction to be justified by the Event.

The Wonder now, the only Difficulty to account for, is, that a Point, peculiar and relative only to the State and Circumstances of the Church at that time, in which Christians in after Ages could be no way concerned, could be under no Obligation of inquiring into, could be no way interested to decide, should, after the Controversy had so long ceased, when the Occasion of it had vanished, re-assume and introduce it again, when it could serve to no other Purpose, than to raise Debates, and to disturb the Peace of the Church: Be this as it will, (though it is a Point that deserves our serious Attention) if the whole Scheme of Christianity is considered in one View, and taken together, and Christ and St. *Paul* may each have the Privilege of being expounded, so as to be consistent with themselves, there will be no jarring, no Discord, no Contrariety between them.

Of all who have ever come in my way, this Writer should be the forwardest to admit and to defend this Rule of Interpretation; without it, he will be every where inconsistent, with the Advantage of it hardly in any two Sections clear of Contradiction.

I have already quoted a Concession of his, that *St. Paul's* Gospel was, in the fundamental Principles of it, the same as the others; I may now quote another, and make the same Use of both. "Tho' the Writings of this Apostle abound, says he, with mysterious Refinements, he doth not prescribe any thing directly repugnant to the Law of Nature." Your Grace, I believe thinks, that a Thing of this Kind did not drop inadvertently from the Author; that whatever he wrote he intended should come under the Notice of his Reader. I think the same: Let us suppose him then for once sincere, and it will be pertinent to ask; Is the Doctrine of absolute Predestination directly opposite to the Law of Nature, or is it not? If it be not, then it is not absurd, as he said before, nor prophane: If it be; then, by this Concession, it is none of *St. Paul's*: The Conclusion is not to be evaded; his warmest Friends, his most passionate Admirers, cannot clear him of it.

Again, I ask, is the Doctrine of absolute Predestination a fundamental Principle; or is it not? If it is, then Christ and *St. Paul* do not differ; for his Gospel, in the fundamental Principles, it is confessed is the same as the other's: If it is not a fundamental (which I take upon me to affirm is the Truth) it is then at highest a Subject of Curiosity, about which every Christian may inquire, or not, as he pleases; and give that Sense to the Apostle's Words

Words which best suits his Judgment, so as not to disturb the Peace of others, or break in upon any Rule of Christian Charity.

I explain myself thus: The Doctrine here delivered by *St. Paul* (if it must be called the Doctrine of Predestination; for the Choice of the Term was very injudicious) at the Time that he wrote his Epistle to the *Romans*, was a fundamental Doctrine, of great Use, and strict Necessity to insist upon, and to explain both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*; but when the Controversy dropped between them, as it did, when the Occasion was removed by the breaking up of the *Jewish* State, and the intire Abolition of the Ceremonial Law, it ceased to be a fundamental Doctrine, and never was afterwards; after that, no Attention seems to have been given to it in the Church, it was quite neglected, and in a manner intirely forgotten; and had it not been for the united Labours of *Austin* and *Jerom*, the latter of whom seems to have had no View in taking it up, but to oppose and correct the Errors of *Pelagius*; though the former had another and a different View, *viz.* to confute the Heresies of *Cerdon*, *Marcion*, and other Christian *Manichees*, which had been propagated even to his Time; it is more than probable that we should never have heard of it, nor been troubled with it in our Days. The Truth is, that upon the Authority of this great Doctor it took root, spread, and became for several Ages the Catholic Doctrine of the Church; an Event that need not surprize us who know what the State of Christianity was, what the Doctrines in Mode were, to what Points the Zeal and Labours of the principal Men turned, and the extreme Ignorance, in consequence of the Generality of Professors, through the intermediate Space, from the middle or close of the 5th down to the Opening of the

15th Century ; and all that we have to lament now, is, that our Reformers were so unhappily circumstanced, as to be under a Necessity of seeming to adopt it in part, and of giving it the strongest Sanction it ever received ; with whatever Confidence or Bigotry the System has been abetted by *Calvinists* and *Jansenists*, and, in the other Extreme, however it has been derided and exposed to Ridicule by *Lutherans*, *Arminians*, *Molinists*, and *Jesuits*, it can never be proved either against Christ or St. *Paul*, that it was theirs : Even in the Sense it may be received as a Doctrine of Christianity, I am free to maintain that it is not a fundamental one, that it is not a Point that any Believer is concerned to examine, or to inquire about ; it arose at first from a Peculiarity in the Circumstances upon which the Church and Kingdom of Christ at first set out ; it might be of Use in arguing with *Jews* still, but to Believers it is, it can be of none.

If this Notion appear new, let not its Novelty disgust ; let it be examined, and I dare answer it will be found to be true : And I have only to observe farther in Vindication of the Church, whereof I am a Member, that the Taint of it was never very strong among us ; great Caution was used in drawing up the Article, the Expression is very ambiguous, the Sense very doubtful, there is some Reason to think the Ambiguity was designed : It was originally of exotic Growth and Culture, and never has thriven much in our Climate ; they were Foreigners who brought it here, and even their Posterity, or rather their Successors, seem every where willing to weed it out and to throw it aside : Whether our own Clergy are generally in the same way of thinking, I am no way privileged to say ; what your Grace's Sentiments are in the Matter, I do not pretend to know, much less should I pretend

tend to guess at ; but this I have reason to think, that had it not been for the untimely, and unfortunate End of Archbishop *Laud*, too ambitious, and too fond of Power, but not so bad a Man as he has been called, none of our Clergy, at this Day, would have been under the Difficulties which this Author takes upon him in their Name to complain of.*

To an extreme and very unjust Aversion to Popery at one Time, we are indebted for the Appearance it makes in our System, to an unreasonable Dread of the same Evil, that we were not delivered from it at another.

In speaking to Points, wherein the Doctrine of our Church may be supposed to interfere, I confess to your Grace, I have a true filial Awe upon my Mind ; even where I could not implicitly assent, I do not think myself privileged explicitly to contradict ; I will therefore presume to hope, that as I intend no Offence, so that none will be taken, at any Thing I have advanced,

In general, I apprehend, that reasoning from the Nature of the Case, and the Design of the Epistle, is the surest, and best Method of acquitting our Apostle ; because whatever the Circumstances of the Case before him would not admit of or was inconsistent with his general Plan, whatever Colour is given to it, or Plausibility it is set off with, that could never be his Meaning ; he could not intend to contradict himself, he could have no Design to overturn and destroy the Force of his own Reasoning : If his View was to bring in both *Jews* and *Gentiles* into the Fold, he would not press

* Essay 4. §. 30.

them with Arguments more likely to keep them at a Distance, or to drive them out. He was too much in Earnest to do the Latter, he was too wary and accurate to be betrayed into the Former. From the ambiguous and equivocal Sense and Use of Words and Phrases long since obsolete, all Explications of the Sense of any Author, will ever be liable to some Objections : However rational and consistent any Explication may appear, none for that Reason, will ever be so sure and safe a Standard to determine the Sense of an Author by, as that I have mentioned : An exact Agreement among Commentators rarely happens, for various Reasons, the Thing is perhaps impossible, and this Disagreement when it happens, gives, in some Cases, a too plausible Handle to the common Enemy to play them first one against another, and afterwards to discard them all : New Explications should therefore be always attempted with great Wariness and Modesty ; yet in a Case like this before us, where there is no Danger, that a Disagreement can hurt the common Cause, nor any Advantage lost by it, that has been gained by preceding Expositors, tho' I should neither adopt their whole Sense, nor follow it exactly, I may be allowed to offer, what I think a just, and rational Explication of the Sense of the Apostle.

With Mr. *Locke*, my Lord, I so far agree, that this, and the Remainder of the Chapter seems to have been said to confirm the *Gentile* Converts in the Assurance of the Love and Favour of God to them through Christ, though they were not under the Law :* But when he says that the *Jews* were rejected nationally, and the *Gentiles* favoured nationally, and that the Apostle meant to assert the

* Note on v. 28.

Right, which God has over all the Nations of the Earth, to raise, and to favour one, to depress, and reject another, I cannot subscribe or go along with him ; it bears, I think, a little too hard upon the Sanction of natural Law, which arises from the Sense, Apprehension, and Evidence, we have, that the Virtues of Men in their social State, tend naturally to their Happiness, and their Vices to their Misery. The Author I contend with has the same Observation, but to shew his Inconsistency, how little his Reader can at any Time rely upon any Thing he says, he again retracts this, and expressly affirms, that Mr. *Locke's* Exposition may be admitted, because conformable enough to the Sanction of the Law of Nature. †

To the pious Labours of Mr. *Taylor*, who came after, and has improved much upon Mr. *Locke's* Scheme, I acknowledge myself much indebted ; and though I should be of Opinion, that in some Things his Scheme is precarious and too hypothetical, not able to bear all, that he has laid upon it, yet in some Things I cheerfully adopt his Sentiments, and may not scruple to borrow an Observation or two from him, that will serve to clear up, and confirm what I take to be the true Sense of the Passage in Question.

(1) He has, my Lord, I apprehend, clearly proved that in the Apostolic Writings, all that are in the visible Church and profess the Faith of the Gospel, are numbered among the Called, Elected, or Justified ; from whence it will follow, consistently with the Sense of the Paraphrase I am to give, that all the Called, Elected, and Justified, were foreknown and predestinated.

† *Fragm. & Min. p. 456.*

(2) He

(2) He has shewn, that Calling and all the consequent Privileges, and Benefits here mentioned, are intended, and urged by the Apostle, as Motives only to Obedience; that as *Grace* is the Foundation, and original of the Gospel Scheme, so it is the prime Motive in it.

That the Motives of the Gospel are never in this Order——

Ye are still Children of Wrath, still under the Power of Darkness, Strangers from the Covenant of Promises, therefore believe, and repent, and love God.—

But thus,

Ye are Elect, called, saved, justified, washed, regenerated, Children of God, Saints, Heirs, therefore by this Goodness of God to you, be induced, to love, and to obey.

(3) He has shewn that those Blessings and Privileges never once import an absolute final State of Favour and Happiness, but are to be considered only as Displays, Instances, and Descriptions of God's Love, and Goodness to us, to operate as moral Means upon our Hearts.

This, my Lord, is an Observation of great Importance, to the right understanding of the whole Scriptures of the New Testament, and many Parts of the Old, and most effectually clears St. *Paul* of the Doctrine of absolute Predestination, in the Sense in which it stands in St. *Austin*, and most modern Systems.

This being premised, I offer to your Grace the following Paraphrase as the true Sense of those
Texts,

Texts, from which the Doctrine has been deduced.

Ch. 8. v. 28. And we know that all Things work together for Good to them who are called according to his Purpose.

And we know that God co-operates with those, and ordereth all things for their Good, who obey his Call, and accommodate themselves to his Will.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the Image of his Son, that he might be the First-born among many Brethren.

For those whom he before approved of on account of their believing in his Son, and being obedient to his Call, those also he pre-ordained, or appointed to be conformed to the Image of his Son, in suffering like him, who in this respect, was their Fore-runner, or first-born Brother; and those whom he thus appointed to be conformed to the Image of his Son, those also he actually called, to suffer, and to bear Affliction.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them also he called, and whom he called, them also he justified, and whom he justified, them also he glorified.

And those whom he thus called to suffer, to them also he gave Strength to persevere in the Righteousness of Faith, in spite of Temptation, and those whom he thus justified, or enabled to be just, them also he determined to endow, or to adorn with extraordinary, and wonderful or spiritual Gifts, to enable them to be so.

How

How far your Grace will approve of this Paraphrase, I dare not say, but before you give Judgment, I must beg of you to consider the strict Import of some Words in the Original; I submit it to you with the greater Readiness, because I have occasionally observed many Years ago, that the Knowledge of Languages is a Point that you excel in.

Let me observe to you, first, that *προβησι*, *propositum*, in the 28th Verse is synonymous to *voluntatem*; and that *κλητοι*, *vocati*, in St. Paul's Sense, always signifies, who obey him that calls, as may be seen by comparing this with Ch. 1. 7. in which Sense it is also used, *Revel.* 17. 14.

Let me observe again that the Sense of *προεγνω*, *præscivit*, v. 29. whom he did foreknow, is whom he did approve, as believing in his Son, and obedient to his Call: For as *γνωσκειν*, Ch. 7. 15. signifies *approbare*, *That which I do, I allow not*, &c. So *προγνωσκειν*, is *prius approbare*, to approve beforehand.

Let me observe farther, that *προωρισε*, *predestinavit*, is more properly, and consistently with the general Scripture Style translated, by preordained, or appointed; and that this Sense is determined by considering what it was they were predestinated or appointed to: It was to be conformed to the Image of his Son; how, or in what? only in suffering like him; and those whom he thus appointed, those also he called, *sc.* to suffer.

Whatever God appoints to be done, or designs beforehand to be done, he is said in Scripture, *προωρισειν*; so you have it *Acts* 4. 24. *προωρισει γενεσθαι*; and

and that it was only to suffer like him, that they were called and appointed, may be seen by comparing, with 1 *Peter*, 2. 20, 21. *For hereunto were ye called, for Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his Steps.*

Let me observe also, that δικαιωσις is not so properly rendered *Justificavit* as *Iustos fecit* for δικαιωσις is not only used to express our Beginning or Entrance into the Faith, to which, according to Mr. *Taylor*, it might not improperly be applied here, but likewise our Progress in it. And thus the Sense will be as I have used it above; he gave, or he supplied them with Strength to persevere in opposition to all Temptation, and all Opposition from Violence or Persecution.

Then those whom he thus justified, *i. e.* thus led to the Righteousness of Faith, those also he glorified, εδοξασε, he determined to adorn with spiritual Gifts, the only Glorification, they were capable of in this Life.

It could not, my Lord, possibly refer to the Glory they were to inherit in a Life to come; and that it signified no more than that he determined to glorify, may be seen by comparing it with *Ephe- sians* 1. 4. where Elegit, Chosen, signifies plainly determined to be chosen.

Let me observe lastly, that this whole Exposition is confirmed by the following Interrogatory, v. 31. *What shall we say to this? i. e.* what shall we infer from it? Why this, that since God is for us, since God has thus determined to support and to enable us, by extraordinary spiritual Gifts; who can prevent the Benefits, that he has designed for us? our suffering here is so far from being an Argument of

of his forsaking us, that it ought to convince us, of his Love, his Favour and Regard. We should from this rest satisfied, that since he has given him to us, and for us, he will with him, also give us all things. *

This, my Lord, is evidently the Sum of the Apostle's whole Argument from the 15th Verse of this Chapter to the End. Christ's Suffering was their Pattern, and by suffering like him, they were to be conformed to his Image; his Reasoning plainly has Respect to nothing else; he does not seem to have had any thing more in view, than to convince and to assure them, that their Sufferings, instead of being Tokens of God's Displeasure, were, and should be received by them, as real Assurances of their being at present in his Favour,

* As I have already observed that *Calvin* himself explained these Texts in a Sense not disagreeing with the above Paraphrase, it may not be amiss to quote here his Words, for the Use of those who value his Authority.

Calvin in Rom. 8. 28.

“ Si quis malit seorsum legere hanc sententiam, ut novo argumento contendat *Paulus*, non ægrè vel moleste ferendas esse res adversas, quæ salutem adjuvant, non repugno.

V. 29. “ Ab ipso igitur electionis ordine demonstratur, omnes fidelium afflictiones nihil esse aliud, quam modum quo Christo conformentur.

V. 30. “ Verbum *præstiniendi* non electionem notari sed illud Dei propositum vel decretum, quo suis crucem ordinavit ferendam: Vocatio enim hic, ab arcana electione, distinguitur tanquam inferior.”

The Wonder then is how *Calvin* after freeing those Texts in so plain a Manner, of the rigid Doctrine of absolute Predestination, should take it up, and against his own Sense, go so deep into *Austin's* Scheme.

and

and Pledges of their receiving still higher, and stronger Proofs of it, if they persevered, and improved them according to his Purpose and Decree.

In the foregoing Explication I have sincerely formed my Judgment by the best Light I had, and on Review, think I am right, but *si quis sane melius aliquid potest invenire, et Evidentioribus de Scripturis Sanctis assertionibus, confirmare quæ dicit, illa potius quam hæc recipiantur*. Whether, my Lord, I am right or wrong, the Point still will be equally clear, that St. *Paul* could have no such Doctrine in his Thoughts, as the Objector has charged him with. The Apostle will not be intelligibly prophane, because he is intelligibly blasphemous; so far from it, that St. *Paul* in this Place cannot be supposed to be establishing any Doctrine at all. His general Subject, was a Point of Controversy at the Time between *Jews* and Christians, and a nice and perfect understanding of it at present, seems necessary no farther, than as it may be of Use to vindicate Christianity still against *Jews*, and those who personate *Jews* in their Disputes. The Controversy, as I have already observed, ceased with the Occasion of it, and the principal Cause of the Obscurity so generally complained of, was perhaps, its lying so long neglected, till a different Mode of Language had obtained; the Author himself supposes, that St. *Paul* was sufficiently intelligible at the Time to those he wrote to: but were the Obscurity greater than it is, the Objection is trifling; because the Matter treated of, was never afterwards, is not now, a necessary Point of Doctrine; it is not essential to Faith, or to Practice; it is such as Christians may, or may not, be safely ignorant about:

Whatever is necessary to either, we with Reason assume, (though this Author will not allow us) is very clearly revealed in Terms neither ambiguous nor obscure. Had they who had the Care of the Scriptures in the 2d and 3d Centuries conceived it of general Importance to Christians to have understood St. *Paul's* Sense in the Matter, I presume, and not without Grounds, that they would have taken more Pains than they have, to explain it; whereas we rarely meet with it in any of the Writings that are extant of those Centuries. *Tertullian* and *Origen* are plainly against *Austin* in the Matter, little or no Notice seems to have been taken of it, 'till *Pelagius*, *Cælestinus* and others, whom *Austin* would needs pass for *Manichees*, set him to invent and dress up that Scheme, which he injudiciously imagined necessary to confute them all, and to him and modern *Calvinists*, we owe all the Difficulty that puzzles us at this Day.

After all, is it not most extraordinary, my Lord, that this Author should presume to affirm so dogmatically, *That the Doctrine of St. Paul in this Matter is very intelligibly prophane*,* and in another to confess, *That in what Sense the Apostle understood his own Doctrine, he cannot take upon him to determine*.

It might be of some Use, perhaps too, no disagreeable Entertainment, to collect and to present in one View, the several Inconsistencies and Contradictions that lie scattered through the Works of this celebrated Writer: I decline it not, my Lord, for the Trouble it would give me, but because

* Frag. & Min. p. 456.

they are too many to be brought into the Limits I have assigned to these Letters, from the Fear of encroaching too much on your Grace's Leisure; and an Observation more pertinent, and immediately connected with the Subject I am upon, offers from the Manner of expressing himself in the Page where he laid his Objection, with which I shall put an end to this too long Letter.

“ The Doctrine, says he, taught by St. *Paul* is
“ not only very intelligibly prophane, but it is
“ likewise repugnant to all the Ideas of God's
“ moral Perfections.”

Would your Grace, if you had not read it, believe that a Man could possibly say this, who had so often affirmed, *That we have no Ideas of God's moral Perfections at all* ? How People may be disposed to bear with this from this Author, I know not, but in the Opinion of his Friends, such Inconsistencies would hardly pass, or be thought tolerable in another. If they think they are to be excused in him, I must conclude them as great Enemies to Reason as to Revelation, for I defy any Reason to reconcile these contradictory Propositions.

I intend not, my Lord, to meddle in the Dispute, whether we have any Idea of what Justice and Goodness are in God, it will be sufficient to observe in general, that if we have no Idea of either, we can never with any certainty affirm, that any Doctrine is repugnant to God's Justice, and Goodness, or in any Instance conformable to them : Justice and Goodness are certainly Perfections of the Divine Nature, this he will own, nor will any one else I think deny, and yet if they are

either quite different Things in God from what they are in Man, and quite inconceivable to Man's Understanding, I want to know, why he owns it, or how he can be sure of it, since he will not allow that even Analogy can help our Ideas : Let it be remembred, my Lord, that I argue only *ad Hominem*, without pretending to pronounce definitively ; but the Consequence will stand good against him, that if we have no Ideas, no Doctrine can be repugnant to our Ideas ; to a Man who has no Idea of White, you can never prove that Black is repugnant, or contrary to the Idea of White. To a Man who has no Idea of Virtue, you can never prove that Vice is repugnant to the Idea of Virtue. This, my Lord, is at the lowest an unpardonable Abuse of Language in him, because it is an Abuse that he never will allow or excuse in another.

There is nothing more shocking to my Understanding, than the rigid *Calvinistical* Doctrine of Predestination, the Consequences of it are frightful, too frightful for the most rigid *Calvinists* themselves to maintain, though they never were nor never will be able to evade them ; but then I affirm, that the most rigid *Calvinist*, has as good a Right to maintain, and as good a Right to be believed, that his Doctrine is not repugnant to the Ideas of God's moral Perfections, as he has to assert that it is, for upon his Principles, upon the *Postulatum* he has assumed, no one can say, whether it is or is not : All that can be said for it on either side, is, that it is *Argumentum ad Ignorantiam*, which in many Cases is very proper ; but then he and his Friends of the Infidel Tribe will be obliged to admit that St. *Paul* is as well intitled to argue from human Ignorance, for Modesty,
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Humility, Acquiescence, Submission, and Resignation to the divine Will and Wisdom, and against Arrogance, Conceit and Presumption, as either he or they : Must the Truth and Evidence of Religion be weakned, or destroyed, by the same Argument when urged against it by one, that is intended to confirm and strengthen it by another ? must the same Argument I say be clear, cogent, and irresistible, when urged against Religion, weak, trifling, obscure, and absurd, when offered in its Defence ? What is this but to say, that Unbelievers have clear Ideas, just and distinct Perceptions of God's Attributes, Believers none ?

If this be the Consequence of admitting any religious Faith that it immediately robs men of their Senses, brings with it an Incapacity of reasoning and understanding, the Men who combine to banish Religion out of the World, to root out Piety and all pious Sentiments from the Hearts of Mankind, are for aught we can see their best Friends, and they who cultivate, and labour to improve them, their most dangerous, their only unquestionable Enemies.

St. *Paul*, according to this Author,* “ after steering his Course through all these Rocks, thought it safe to cast Anchor, and to wind up the Contest in this modest Intimation, How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his ways past finding out.”

Nay, he says farther, “ That he did not proceed to this ’till he had first answered the Advocates for *Judaism*, by Arguments taken from

* Vol. 5. p. 350.

“ the Ideas of general Equity, of the Nature of
 “ God, of his Relations to Men, &c.” How
 applicable to him is what he applies to Metaphy-
 sicians in general *Qua teneam protea nodo*. For
 after all, in the Opinion of our Author, St. Paul
 was prophane, and what he taught repugnant
 to the Ideas of God’s moral Perfections, though
 he reasons himself a hundred times over in
 the same Method, uses the same Argument, and
 frankly admits, “ That in all such Cases, all
 “ should be ultimately resolved into the infinite
 “ Wisdom and Power of the First Cause,* and
 “ that nothing is more conformable to our Idea
 “ of God, than to believe that human Reason
 “ cannot account for the Proceedings of infinite
 “ Wisdom in a Multitude of Cases.” If this
 be true, as indeed it is, the Instance which St.
 Paul had before him, bids fair to be one of
 those; nor do I see how the Advantage can
 be wrested from him, but by supposing, that one
 who pretended to be inspired, or to derive Know-
 ledge from Revelation, must infallibly always be
 wrong; and he that considers all Pretensions to
 it, as impossible, enthusiastick, and imaginary,
 must necessarily always be right.

I doubt I have trespassed too long, and tired
 your Grace, I will therefore stop the Current of
 my Thoughts, and take Leave of the Subject,
 by observing, that the Author has left behind
 him one Advice, by which we may all profit
 somewhat, if we will, viz. “ *To Reason cauti-*
 “ *ously, to pronounce modestly, to practise sincere-*
 “ *ly, and to hope humbly.*” To do this, he adds,
 “ *Is to be Wise and Good :*” § In this he is right ;

* Vol. 5. p. 474.

§ Fragm. & Min. V. 5. p. 41.

but if to be Wise and Good a Man must do all this, the Author's Wisdom and Goodness, we have Reason to think, were very partial, and very defective: From the Picture he has left of himself, drawn by his own Hand, we see with Ease, we can say with Certainty, that however he reasoned or lived, he neither pronounced with Modesty, nor hoped with Humility.

My next will come within less Compass, and put an End, I expect, to your Grace's Trouble.



LETTER V.

YOUR Grace may think that I am disposed to trifle with you, as much as the Author has trifled with his Readers, by proceeding to consider the Instance he has brought, of what he calls, “very intelligibly trifling in the Apostle.”

I confess it is below your Notice, and were it not that I find the Author’s Name, in the Opinion of some People, gives Weight to every Thing he says, I should think it below my own: Your Grace, since you have indulged me so long, must therefore allow me to go on, and to finish my Plan, though I can hardly hope to entertain you; what I have to say, may be of use to others.

From what he has said upon this Head, we are necessarily led to believe, that he meant no more than to swell the Number and Bulk of his Objections, to convince us, that, there was nothing in the Character or Writings of this Apostle that could please him. Where-ever he comes under his Notice, he has laboured the Point to such Excess, speaks so much in the Style of those Fathers, who he says, * “Were very choleric, very foul-mouthed, and often guilty of scandalous Exag-

* Eff. 4. p. 335.

“geration.”

“aggreration.” That his Caution against believing them, is more necessary against believing himself.

It happens, however, not unfortunately, that the Instance he has selected is no Point of Doctrine, but merely of Discipline; and, in Matters of this Sort, your Grace may recollect, that he acknowledges the Apostle had some right to decide and to prescribe; nay, he does more; for though the Apostle's Argumentation is, in his Judgment, intelligibly trifling, it might, he acknowledges, “appear very conclusive and intelligible to the *Corinthians* *.” I apprehend, therefore, that these two Concessions, without farther Evidence, are sufficient to acquit the Apostle, and to convict his Blasphemer. For thus, my Lord, I may argue, and the Argument, I think, will be unanswerable; that, if in the Exercise of their spiritual Gifts, any Irregularity or Indecency had arisen, or that these Things had been the Occasions of Strife and Confusion among the *Corinthians*; whatever the Nature of the Case was, whatever Method the Apostle took to decide it, if his Argumentation was both conclusive and intelligible, it could not be trifling; the Gifts they were endowed with, we will say to humour him, might be trifling; the Disputes that had arisen about the Exercise of them, might be trifling; but the Sentence, upon Appeal, by which they were decided, if conclusive, if intelligible to the Disputants, could not be trifling.

We all know, that in some Conjunctions, the slightest Ceremony may be of great Importance, and call for the Interposition of the highest Authority: The slighter it is, the hotter generally the

* Essay 4. p. 332. and 335.

Debate is; if it is neglected, irremediable Evils may follow: For the Authority, which seasonably applied, was sufficient to stop or prevent them, may be incompetent afterwards.

But waving this, if it was the Subject of the Apostle's Discourse which he meant to censure, I answer, it was of more Importance than He, or possibly some others, may imagine: For the Customs of that Age and Country were quite different from what they are in ours, and without taking these in, there is no forming a proper Judgment in the Case: Many Things are decorous, proper, and allowable among us, that were not so amongst them; with us, Women mix openly with Men in all public Assemblies, and Custom has given them a Right to appear in our Assemblies, without being covered or veiled: In the Cities of *Greece* it was otherwise; they were rarely allowed to appear abroad, never admitted at any Entertainment, except among near Relations; even at home, their Apartments were retired, where no body was allowed to enter, except Kinsfolk and intimate Friends. Now the Apostle's Argument has plainly a Respect to these Customs, and, in this light, instead of trifling, is extremely pertinent; an Attempt to break through these Customs, on pretence of extraordinary Revelations, or of exercising the Gifts of Prophecy, as authorising them to speak, and to be uncovered in the public Assemblies, if not timely prevented, might have been of very bad consequence; his Interposition in the Case, was therefore both proper and necessary, and having Effect, by being intelligible and conclusive, could not be trifling.

We are to consider farther, that the same Method of Reasoning that would be impertinent or
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nugatory in an Address to one Kind of People, would not be so to another: Whoever will argue so as to convince and to persuade, must accommodate his Discourse to the common Notions, and bear a particular Respect to the prevailing Customs of the Age and Country he lives in, nay, what is often very difficult, to the Capacities of the People he is to speak to. The same Method, Stile, Language, Allusions, and Arguments will not serve, nor indeed be proper, when speaking *ad aulam*, or *ad clerum*, which might do very well, when speaking *ad populum*; and St. Paul was too great a Master of popular Address, not to know what would suit, and how to accommodate his Discourse to the Capacities, Customs, the particular Notions and Circumstances of the People he was writing to: there is accordingly a very observable Difference in his Address and manner of Reasoning in the different Situations he was in; had he been to speak to a Subject of this Kind before the *Areopagites*, to *Festus*, or *Agrippa*, his Argument and Address had probably been both different.

As the Author's Remark upon this Passage is exceedingly impertinent, his Conclusion too, my Lord, is equally unjust: It may serve to shew, that in the Distribution of Gifts, Women as well as Men, had sometimes a Share; but it does not prove that both had a Right to publish them in the public Assemblies; for there Women were positively enjoined Silence, and not permitted to speak or to prophecy: We read it is true in another Place of Women's praying and prophesying in the Assemblies: What then? Are we therefore to conclude that the Apostle contradicted himself, and has given inconsistent Instructions? It cannot be; the most that may be inferred is, that under certain
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Circumstances he has allowed at one time, what probably in different Circumstances he prohibited at another : We should, my Lord, I say, for that very Reason suppose, that the Circumstances of the two Cases were so different, as to make this necessary ; and that in given Circumstances, what might be proper and becoming at one time, or in one way, might not be so in another : Whence he was under a Necessity of varying his Instructions to provide for both: But so it is, that in the Opinion of this Writer, every Thing that makes against the Apostle, must be admitted, and nothing that can be thought to favour him may.

* An Author of great Note and Learning, thinks the Difficulty here is removed by understanding the Word *Prophecyng*, in this Place, to mean no more than *praising God by singing* in alternis, as the Custom was in the primitive Church, according to *Eusebius*, and the Author of the Apostolical Constitutions ; and the Supposition, my Lord, may not seem unreasonable, because it is no unusual Signification of the Word in other Parts of Scripture, and because, as he farther observes, it is here coupled with Prayer, which are Acts of Worship that generally go together. But there is this strong Objection against it, that as Mr. *Locke* † observes, the Apostle, *ch. xiv. 3.* expressly explains Prophecyng by speaking to Edification, Exhortation, &c. which undoubtedly is the Act only of one Person.

There is therefore a third Way which I prefer to either, which, to my Apprehension, intirely removes the Difficulty ; and that is, by assuming that Women had separate Assemblies, even for divine

* To Mr. *Mede* Disc. 16.

† In *Loc.*

Wor-

Worship, where Men were never allowed to be present, or to mix with them *.

The extreme Delicacy used in the Cities of *Greece* to guard the Virtue and Chastity of Women, and the many severe Restraints which that Delicacy had laid them under, renders this highly probable: Besides it clears up, very ingeniously, to me at least, very satisfactorily, the Meaning of the Words, *because of the Angels*, which Mr. *Locke* confesses he did not understand: It is strengthened too, if not confirmed by an Observation from *Grotius*, "That
 " although in *Judea*, where the Customs were not
 " so severe, and Men were allowed the necessary
 " Access to do the Office of Deacons, the Institution of Men-deacons was sufficient: Yet, in the
 " Cities of *Greece*, where such Liberty was intirely
 " prohibited, they had, and there was a Necessity
 " of instituting both Female Deaconesses and Presbyters;" which last Office, though only occasional, *Grotius* imagines continued in use among them till the Council of *Laodicea*, and were ordained by Imposition of Hands. So that to these Female ~~προεβυτρίδες~~ the Apostle here may be supposed to be giving Directions; and I confess to your Grace, that neither this Order in the Church (at first but occasional, though it continued longer in use than the Occasion of it seemed to require) nor these Instructions can be well accounted for, but upon the Supposition already advanced, that Women had their separate Assemblies for Worship, &c.

It has been imagined by others, that the Difficulty which has puzzled Mr. *Locke* is cleared by correcting the Reading, only leaving out one of

* *Taylor* on *Rom. xvi. 1.*

the γ's in the Word ἀγγελοις, in which way the Sense will be, because of the Flock or Congregation of young Men * ; but this is not supported by any various Reading in the Manuscripts, and the Observation in itself is rather too minute to come from so great a Man, or to deserve much Stress or Consideration : But however this be, which ever Way we take to expound it, the Matter is not great, and none but such as are extremely addicted to cavil, and who, to please and entertain themselves, will trifle with their Readers, would take any notice of it ; for this Reason, that at present it no way affects us, nor is it of any consequence to Religion how it is determined : Without an exact Knowledge of the Customs and Usages of the Church of *Corinth* at the time, and likewise of the civil Customs of the Country in Conformity to which the Ecclesiastical ones were undoubtedly regulated, there is no being precise or definitive in the Point : Of the Customs of the Church we have no account to direct our Judgment, besides what may be collected from the Writings of this very Apostle, and if we are to depend upon him for Information, he has an undoubted Right to be interpreted so as to be consistent, especially as it is only from our Ignorance of the Customs that this very trifling Difficulty at all arises ; though of the civil Customs referred to, which help to confirm the Exposition I have given, we have Accounts authentic, clear, and full.

If your Grace, or any other intelligent Reader, should here ask me, why I have been at so much Pains to consider, and to answer, since St. *Paul* has

* Bishop *Taylor*'s Lib. of Propi.

himself given so full and so determinate an Answer to this Objection, in the last Verse of the Chapter; I have no Answer, no Apology to offer, but that already intimated, that the Rank, in which the Opinion of the Public has set the Author, extorted it from me: Whatever he says, is, it seems, sure of Attention; for this Reason, every Evidence must be weighed, every Allegation must be tried, the slightest not rejected without hearing. The Apostle's Sentence is undoubtedly *à propos*, and under that I shall leave it upon the Reader's Thoughts: *But if any Man seem to be contentious, we have no such Custom, neither the Churches of God.*

We have, my Lord, one Objection more to consider, *viz.* "The Imputation of Hypocrisy; by "shifting his Doctrine, and assuming contrary "Characters, as Occasion called, and Exigency required." In this the Author is not single, nor the first who made the Objection; Mr. *Chubbs*, equally candid in the same Spirit of Infidelity (under the Conduct of which Mole-hills so easily rise into Mountains) had before him objected the same: As often as it has been objected, I doubt not it has been answered; but as the Answers have come none of them to my Hands, and may have escaped others who would wish to have it considered, I may be allowed to lengthen my Page, in the Hope that what I write may possibly fall into their way. Tho' we should fail to convince, or reclaim such as have already gone off and declared against us, we may yet prevent wavering, and may confirm the unstable.

In the Opinion of the Author, the Objection cannot be evaded: "We have, says he, St. *Paul's* "own Words for it, and he boasts of it." We
have

have so; and we neither ought, nor will attempt to evade it: This Part of his Character we shall neither desire, nor endeavour to conceal.

*Volet hæc sub Luce videri
Judicis Argutum quæ non formidat Acumen.*

We have only to wish, my Lord, that the Example had been more, and oftener copied; that the same prudent Conduct, by which the Author tells us "Christianity was at first so successfully propagated," had been followed by many, who have since reaped much Fruit of his Labour; and in the Ease and Security to which they succeeded, had little more to do, than to preserve and keep together what he had so carefully planted and watered, to preserve it from the Canker of Vermin, and from the Rust of Time. By the same Measures, judiciously pursued, with less Policy and more Simplicity, it had been in a Situation, at this Day, neither easy nor safe for him to attack.

Whether Evil, in any Case, may be committed or incurred, for sake of obtaining even a real and greater Good, is a Proposition about which Divines and Politicians may be supposed, at all times, not to agree. What Reasons of State, in dangerous and critical Cases, may sometimes advise, how far Ends may sanctify Means, neither laudable nor allowable, I have nothing to say to at present, farther than to intimate, that, in general, the Affirmative, I believe, is too often, and too hastily assumed; and that Necessities are too frequently supposed, where in fact there are none: Of this I am positive, that of Christian Ethics, the Negative is always the Principle, and that no History furnishes an Instance more apposite than that of *St. Paul* to

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illustrate and to prove it: In the Sense in which temporising is vicious or blameable, no Man was ever less prone to it: He knew not how to do it; he seems complexionally rather to have leaned to the other Extreme, and that all his Prudence and good Sense were no more than sufficient, in some Cases, to check that Propensity: Where Duty called, where Conscience set the Bounds, no Man was ever more resolute and steady; he was immoveable, incapable of bending; in Doctrine and Discipline his Rule was, *Ne ad horam cessimus* *. This celebrated Writer, in his assumed Character of a Patriot, if he was sincere, as we have reason to doubt, was not a warmer Assertor of Civil Liberty, than St. Paul was of Religious and Ecclesiastical: To him Christians are principally indebted, after Christ, for the Portion they enjoy; when it was totally lost, the Odds was against us, that without the Light of his Example and Doctrine, it had never been recovered: It was weak Policy in those who laid the Plan of enslaving the World, when they had so long and so successfully pursued it, to preserve in their Archives, Books, which they might have reckoned would one time or other be produced and pleaded against them, and of Weight and Authority sufficient to overset them.

The same Providence which preserved them then, will enable, we trust his Servants, to defend them now.

* I know not whether the Reader may think it worth nothing, that Dr. Grabe in his Notes upon *Mills*, and F. Simon in his Crit. Hist. of the Text of the New Testament, both say, that this Text should be read without the Negative *ovde* according to the oldest Manuscripts; but the Sense plainly requires it should be retained, though it will not bear all that Dr. South and others have laid upon it.

St.

St. *Paul*, it is true, made himself all Things to all Men, that he might by all Means save some: No Man had ever a more enlarged or more affectionate Charity for the whole Race of Mankind. For his Brethren and Kinsmen, according to the Flesh, he had great Heaviness, and continual Sorrow of Heart, so much as to wish himself accursed (or separated) from Christ for their sake; as far as Duty would permit, these kind Sentiments undoubtedly would and did carry him: Accordingly, though his general Doctrine to the *Gentiles* was, that they were intirely exempt from the Burden of the *Mosaic* Rites, and had no need, as this Author has it, to become *Jews* first, in order to become Christians afterwards; and that he thought the Observance of them unnecessary, even to himself, without Prejudice to his real Interest in the New Covenant; yet, upon many Occasions, he did comply with these same *Mosaic* Rites in his own Person, and allowed others to do the same.

Thus * we find that he circumcised *Timothy*, and that before he went up to *Jerusalem*, or had consulted with the other Apostles in the Matter, that either He, or *Aquila*, had a Vow of *Nazaritism* at *Cenchrea*, which he either performed himself, or suffered him to perform; in these two Instances he acted voluntarily and from Judgment; he was under no Constraint, no Awe from the rest of the Apostles, nor is there any Reason to suspect, that there was any Plot or Contrivance between him and the rest: It is therefore from these Instances probable that he had no Intention to conceal his proper Character, at least that he did not imagine that he was disguising it at the Time.

* *Acts* xvi. 1. & xviii. 18.

Afterwards, when he went up to *Jerusalem*, and found that a Suspicion had been entertained there that he taught the *Jews*, who were among the *Gentiles*, to forsake *Moses*: To purge himself of that Suspicion, by the Advice of *James* and of the Elders, he conformed to the same remarkable Institution of the Law, by joining himself to four Men who had a Vow of *Nazaritism*, subjecting himself to the same Vow for seven Days, and joining with them in the same Expence*.

These now, my Lord, are the Instances objected to his Reproach, and brought by our Author to make out the Charge of Hypocrisy, of temporising against Principle, and of dissembling against Conscience: The Author, I confess, my Lord (as he is masterly in this way) has shewn some Art in drawing up the Charge; but I take upon me to say, that he has, at the same time, shewn in the whole such Ignorance of the intire Scheme of Christianity, and the Doctrine of this Apostle, as, if it was not the Effect of wilful Misrepresentation, very ill became him, in the Character either of a Critic or of a Philosopher: In the two Characters, of a Critic and an honest Man, if he gains any thing in the one, he loses it in the other: But to do him Justice in most Cases (where I have been at the trouble of examining) he seems freely to compound, always to give up the latter for sake of the former: Of the Glory that he has acquired, few I believe will, and no Man I think need, to envy him.

In the Case before us, it may be asked (the Author could with Ease have answered it, had he asked himself) whether in any of these Instances, there

* *Acts* xxi. 21. 25.

was any thing directly and properly vicious or sinful, which an upright and a good Man might not safely and innocently comply with? He knew, the contrary will not be pretended, that in their own Nature the Things were *Adiapharous*, neither Good or Evil, but in respect of the End they were designed to serve, and in respect of the Will of the Institutor: From this they derived a temporary, but not a standing or perpetual Obligation: There was then in this way of considering it, no harm in complying with them, when any useful, social, or friendly Purpose might be served by them.

Did Christ peremptorily forbid the Use of all *Mosaic* Rites? This, my Lord, is not pretended; the contrary he often alledges, that Christ, both by Example and Precept, had authorised and given them a Sanction. Did *Paul* himself teach the *Jews*, or lay them under any Injunction not to observe the Law of *Moses*? This, my Lord, our Author does pretend; but in this I affirm, and I can prove, he was mistaken: The Fallacy by which he would impose upon his Readers is this; he confounds contrary Things, or of two makes one; and because he preached to the *Gentiles* an intire Exemption from the *Mosaical* Law, he would have you believe that he did the same to the *Jews*: That when he told the *Gentiles* that they could not be saved, *i. e.* could not be intituled to the Advantages, nor enjoy the Privileges of the new Covenant if they were circumcised; the same was to be understood as said to the *Jews*, though they had already received the Sign, the Seal of legal Righteousness, and could not put it off. It would have been strange Doctrine, my Lord, to a Person already circumcised to tell him, that he must not be circumcised; every *Jew* must have laughed at

such an Argument, no *Jew*, I am sure, could be converted by it.

If we will believe St. *Paul* himself in the Matter, we shall at once see that the Charge is groundless, the Evidence absolutely false: When writing to the *Galatians* he tells the *Gentiles*, that if they be circumcised, Christ shall profit them nothing; to them it was his constant Doctrine. Does he say the same to the *Jews*? By no means. On the contrary, to prevent any such Apprehension, he immediately adds, *But I testify again to every Man that is circumcised*, * i. e. to every *Jew*, that he is a Debtor to the whole Law: Here μαρτυρομαι δε πάλιν, should be rendered, *But I testify again*, and not for I testify again: And it is astonishing that the Commentators have so generally mistaken the Sense of this Passage! when it is plain, that to prove the Consistency of his own Doctrine, the Apostle was here warily guarding against Misapprehension, by putting them in mind, that though he so warmly pressed the *Gentiles* to stand fast in the Liberty with which Christ had made them free, yet, that there was an Exception to the *Jews*; and the Word πάλιν shews, that the same Exception which he admitted then, he had made before.

His circumcising of *Timothy* does in no Respect weaken his Defence; for besides that *Timothy* was

* *Gal.v.1.3.* Even *Grotius* and *Locke* run into the common Mistake, and the latter uses here a very forced and unnatural Paraphrase to bring it to speak his Sense: The Necessity of understanding the Apostle in the Sense I have taken him in, arises from the Difficulty of answering the Author's Objection, upon any other Sense, and vindicating the Apostle; and reconciling, not only his Conduct with his Doctrine, but likewise his Doctrine with the personal Conduct of Christ, and his Discourse upon more than one Occasion.
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the son of a *Jewish* Woman who believed, we have in the History a very particular Reason for his doing of it ; he was well reported of the Brethren who were at *Lystra* and *Iconium*, he therefore took him with him (not to preach to the *Gentiles* as the Objection might suppose) but because of the *Jews* who were in those Quarters, to whom he judged, he would for that Reason be the more acceptable, as they all knew that *Timothy's* Father was a *Greek*.

In neither one nor in all of these Instances, is there, by this Account, the least Inconsistency in *St. Paul's* Doctrine and Character ; in two of them he acted from the Suggestions of his own Prudence to justify his Consistency, and in the other by the Advice of his Brethren, to purge himself of Inconsistency : He was, my Lord, so far from assuming a feigned Character, or dissembling his proper one, that we have all the Reason, which the Circumstances of the Case can possibly give us, to believe, that though he thought the *Mosaic* Rites unnecessary to be observed by himself, with respect to his own personal Interest in the Gospel, yet that he might both safely and innocently comply with them, when the Prospect of gaining his Brethren, or of softening their Prejudices invited him to it. When no such Motive presented, and it was demanded, or insisted upon as a Right ; when false Brethren came in privily to spy out their Liberty, and to bring them again into Bondage ; then even *Titus*, who was with him, being a *Greek*, though an Attempt had been made to compel him, he would not suffer to be circumcised. Take, my Lord, both Accounts, as they are stated in the *Acts*, and in his Epistle of *Timothy* and *Titus*, and you will easily see that his Conduct in

each was proper, consistent, and justifiable; for sufficient good Reasons, he complied in the first; in the last he would not give place by Subjection; he withstood to the Face those who would have compelled him; he would not make himself a Transgressor, by building again the Things he had destroyed.

Upon the Whole, the true, the fair State of the Case, as I apprehend, my Lord, was this; the Rites of the *Mosaic* Law were incorporated, and in some respects part of the national and civil Polity, the Gospel interfered not with any national Polity, in all indifferent Things it left all Men in all Countries in the Constitution in which it found them, without meaning to alter, abrogate, or subvert any of them. With respect to all other Nations, except the *Jews*, this is constantly, universally acknowledged; why with respect to the *Jews* is it denied? can any Man give a Reason? Hence it was that these Rites, many of them, remained in Use so long even under Christianity, longer perhaps than there was Occasion for them, perhaps it may be true, as our Author observes, during a Succession of fifteen Bishops at *Jerusalem*; but when the *Jews* ceased to be a Nation, and had no longer the Temple, nor any Sign of God's peculiar Presence among them; when that was destroyed and they were driven out of the Land, which God had given them, as their Polity was then broken up, quite dissolved, the *Mosaic* Rites of Course ceased, they became, my Lord, not only useless, but impossible to be uted. In this Light *St. Paul* seems to have considered the Matter, and upon this Plan his Doctrine and Conduct are both consistent and reconcileable; he did nothing which any upright conscientious Man in the same Circumstances

cumstances would not, or ought not to have done. Where Compliances were sinful, or would do hurt, no Persuasion could drive him, where it was innocent and expedient his humane charitable Disposition led him easily to it : Upon this View of the Case, no reasonable, no intelligent Reader will desire to be detained, or to have more Words expended in his Vindication.

Thus, my Lord, I have led you a tedious and dreary Course, thro' a very wide and spacious Field, where there was little to entertain the Imagination, where neither your Eye nor your Ear could, I doubt, be agreeably diverted. If I have wearied my self, as indeed I have, it is for that Reason more than probable that I have wearied you too ; I therefore hasten to a Conclusion, and shall trouble you no longer than just to turn your Thoughts for a Moment to the Author's final and decisive Judgment upon the Subject of Religion in general.

He tells you in the last Page of this long Essay, " That Christianity is contained in the Gospels, " and that the Gospel is the Word of God, and " requires our Veneration and strictest Conformity." But in this, my Lord, we are not to mind him, because from a Multitude of Arguments and Observations, through the preceding four hundred Pages, it is very evident that he neither believed a Tittle of this himself, nor would have you believe a Tittle of it. It is all in Sport and Derision, to amuse and divert himself. Throughout this whole Essay the only Point labour'd, and seemingly in View with him, was to weaken every Proof of Christianity, that had been heretofore offered or insisted upon by others, and his

his last Judgment is, that in a political Sense only Religion deserves, or has any Right to be considered by Mankind.

Of what he says then as a Politician, we have a Right to make our Advantage, for if ever he is sincere, it is when he speaks in this Character.

In Theological Controversies, where the Truths of revealed Religion are under Trial, either for their Importance, the Sense in which they are taught, or their Connection with one another, little Weight can be allowed to his Judgment, because in Fact he seems to have been at little or no Pains to inform himself, by studying or examining the Scripture, where only those Truths are taught in their Purity; he seems rather to have trusted to the Accounts of others, and to have searched even them, in the View of finding Objections against them; this is plainly the Use he has made of Ecclesiastical History; for this End only, he seems to have consulted any of the Fathers.

But still, my Lord, the Part that he acted in Life, the various Scenes he had traversed, with the Help of a quick discerning Intellect, must necessarily have opened to his View the Springs of social Happiness, all or most too of the Imperfections and Defects, from which it receives so many and so strong Abatements: In this Capacity therefore his Friends may plead, and we may be obliged to admit, that he has a Right to be heard, I do, my Lord, admit it; and your Grace, I believe, does not think I am wrong.

In that Capacity he delivers himself thus.

“ To

“ To make Government effectual to all the
 “ good Purposes of it, there must be a Religion,
 “ this Religion must be National, and this National Religion must be maintained in Reputation and Reverence ; all other Religions or Sects
 “ must be kept too low to become the Rivals of it :
 “ These are, in my Apprehension, first Principles
 “ of good Policy.”

If the Author is right in this, and I presume, my Lord, neither Friends nor Foes will dispute it with him, I may here draw my Conclusion, the Premises, I apprehend, will sufficiently warrant it.

*“ Why need we go farther, why look out for any
 “ other than the Religion we have.”*

The Christian Scheme, he has acknowledged it, my Lord, twenty Times over, is a Scheme of universal Benevolence ; all the Interests of Mankind are effectually served and secured by it ; every Thing that can make Men happy in themselves, or happy to one another, is taught and recommended in it ; and under such Sanctions as if they add no Strength, as he would sometimes insinuate, to our natural and legal Obligations, can in no respect ever weaken or break in upon them : Was there ever, is there any where, my Lord, at this Day, upon the Face of the Earth, any thing that bears the Form or Appearance of Religion, that, in this View, may be set in Comparison or Competition with it ? Your Grace is ready to answer there is not : The most audacious of the unbelieving Tribe, will hardly say there is.

If then, it be farther true, as he says, “ That
 “ the Wisdom of our Constitution, has joined admirably
 “ mirably

“ mirably well together, the two most compatible
 “ Things in the World, how incompatible soever
 “ they may have been misrepresented, *A Test and*
 “ *a Toleration*, and by rejecting all the Principles
 “ of Latitudinarians and Rigidists, have gone far
 “ to prevent these Evils that gave Occasion to the
 “ Objections of Atheists.

I put the Question, I am not afraid of the Answer : Hath not our National Religion a Right to be maintained in Reputation and Reverence ? If it be less exposed to the Objections of Atheists than any other, upon his Principles it surely has ; why then did he, why do so many others, labour to detract from the Reputation and Reverence both justly and confessedly its due ? Had he, when he assigned himself this Task, have they who drudge on in the same Track, can one or the other pretend to have the Interests of Society, or the particular Good of their Country in their Thoughts ? Have they any Thing to offer in Excuse ? Is not he infamous, are not the rest shameless ?

Let us suppose, my Lord, that our National Religion has some Imperfections ; that a few Errors have been retained ; that by one Means or other it did not come so pure from the Hands of the Refiners, as some rational, some pious Minds perhaps would wish ; our Reformers, we will say, though they did the best they could, did less, than perhaps they were disposed to do ; possibly they retained some Things which they did not like or intirely approve, and for the same or a like Reason, rejected others that they would wish to have kept : Does this give a Reason why any one should, or will it excuse any who do, expose or insult those Imperfections ? Whosoever has used his Thoughts

to

to ſuch Subjects, knows that to alter and to innovate, though it be to reform and mend, a national eſtabliſhed Religion, is rarely a ſafe, at no Time an eaſy Matter ; where one will be ſatisfied with the Innovation, a hundred perhaps would be diſpleaſed ; and they who are ſatisfied and eaſy under the preſent Syſtem or Diſpoſition, have in general we will only ſay, as good a Right to be conſulted and conſidered, as they who are not.

I do not mention this as a ſtanding Reaſon, always in Force, to ſtop or to ſuſpend Reformation, where it is really wanting, but only to intimate, that even where it is eligible, adviſeable, and ſeemingly neceſſary for the reclaiming of Diſſenters, it is a Matter that calls for all the Warineſs, all the Strength of Human Wiſdom ; and that in general, good Minds will always chuſe rather to bear with a few Faults, than run the Hazard, too much to be apprehended, from paſt Experiments, of incurring greater, and of multiplying, inſtead of leſſening the Number of Diſſenters. I may, and I will, my Lord, go farther ; if Diſſenters, even under the Character of Religioniſts, when they make this Demand, ſhall in every Experiment ſhew, that their Deſign was never to reform ours, but to diſcard it, and to ſubſtitute their own in its Place, they ought not, they cannot, they muſt not, at any Time, or in any Circumſtances expect, or hope to be gratified.

In fine, and it is the principal Thing I had in View to recommend to the Reader's ſerious Conſideration : We ſee here from the Confeſſion of this profound Politician, how little our national Religion wants to free it from Exception, and to make it perfect ; if it be not as perfect as it might be,

be, it is, yet better than any other Nation has boast : Let us therefore, my Lord, resolve jointly and unanimously to support it, to maintain it, in that Reputation and Reverence, that as a national Religion in general it is intituled to. Your Grace's Care, I am confident, will not be wanting, and under that Confidence, I take my Leave, and have the Honour to subscribe myself, &c.



F I N I S.



